Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispania

Late Antique Early Medieval Hispania. Landscapes without Strategy [Retail]

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LATE ANTIQUE & EARLY MEDIEVAL HISPANIA

Landscapes without Strategy?

Pilar Diarte-Blasco

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH

Pilar Diarte-Blasco

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MARIE CURIE
ACTIONS

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In recent years, the figure of Professor Enrique Ariño Gil has been also very important to me, not just because he has been part of this project and fundamental in the archaeological survey undertaken, but above all because at any time that we were doing fieldwork – together with the priceless partnership and work of Marta Pérez-Polo – or cleaning thousands of fragments of pottery, he was ready for interesting conversations about Visigoths and about the landscape and its transformations, giving me references and providing new ideas. Deserving a particular mention is Dr Leonor Peña-Chocarro, in whom I have found not only a 'capessa' in the past when I worked as a postdoctoral researcher in the Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma (CSIC), but also a strong friendship, assisting me in my research and giving me much advice to help forward and develop my academic career.

The core of this book is part of a project, which was hosted by and developed with Neil Christie and the School of Archaeology & Ancient History at the University of Leicester, entitled *MED-FARWEST – Urban Centres and Landscapes in Transition. The Mediterranean FarWest in Late Antiquity*. This multi-stranded research examined transitions in

Hispania in particular, but contextualised within wider research on Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Europe to give a global picture of the historic-archaeological record of Roman decay and late to post-Roman transitions to new rulers. Comparisons and contrasts in terms of data, questioning and theorising are many across Europe, and this has helped me debate more the pictures that emerge (or are emerging) in the Iberian Peninsula. As will be seen, levels of knowledge from one area to another in the Peninsula are quite unequal and, sometimes, some regions necessarily lie outside current debates in interpreting changes in landscapes, towns and societies in the Early Middle Ages. However, I owe much to the extraordinary efforts of many historians and archaeologists – both past and present – whose studies have greatly illuminated my chapters; and many of these current scholars have given valuable advice as my work progressed: I am referring (in scrupulously alphabetical order), to Professor Javier Arce, Professor Enrique Ariño Gil, Dr Manuel Castro-Priego, Professor Pablo C. Díaz Martínez, Professor Josep María Gurt i Esparraguera, Professor Lauro Olmo-Enciso, Dr Leonor Peña-Chocarro, Dr Sebastián Pérez-Díaz and Dr Jordina Sales Carbonell, many of who have read and commented on various of my chapters. I would note also here the very great patience and generosity of Neil Christie for checking the English of my text. Of course, any errors and omissions in the text and arguments are my own but, I hope, they are few.

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Since most of the book has been written between Leicester and Madrid, it is fair to extend thanks not only to the University of Leicester – and in particular Nickie Moore, European Research Grants and Contracts Assistant, who always found a way to help me (and not only with the paperwork!), but also to the Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales (CSIC), which hosted me for a research period, overseen by Dr Almudena Orejas Saco del Valle and with the special support of the librarians of this research centre; and to the Universidad de Alcalá, my new home, where I have been able to finish this text, thanks to a Juan de la Cierva-Incorporación grant (No. JCI-2015–24930), from the Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad of Gobierno de España. In that context, I am very grateful to Professor Lauro Olmo-Enciso and my colleague, Dr Manuel

Castro-Priego, for their understanding, giving me the necessary time and help to finish my book.

This book is owes much, moreover, to my parents and my brother, who always support my work and encourage me to continue in the (sometimes) complicated and tough world of research. They always had the right word to make me fight for my dream. Last, but not least, I thank my husband, Juanma, who gave me the strength, just one month after our wedding, to go to United Kingdom as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow, while he remained in Madrid – perhaps not the best situation for newlyweds! He has always believed in my work and, what is most important, he always believed in me. And obviously to Juan, my baby, who grew inside me as this book, too, was developing and who completes our happiness; this is also for him, even though it may be many years before he will want to look at this volume.

Pilar Diarte-Blasco
Madrid, April 2018

Preface

Efforts to explore and explain the changes that affected and impacted on the failing provinces of the late Roman Western Empire still tend to rely much on historical data and narratives, even though scholars readily recognise the deficiencies of these primary sources – whether annals, laws, poems, letters or saints' lives – and their scarce number. Recent historical analyses have been important first of all in questioning the old image of 'decline and fall', and secondly in showing far more active socio-political landscapes, not simply ones dominated by warfare and conflict. Furthermore, these analyses extend to build pictures of social organisation in the new kingdoms that established themselves – not always long-lasting – in the course of the 5th and 6th centuries AD, and provide guides to territorial control, to core economic structures and, as importantly, to religious agents.

But most historians of the late antique, post-Roman and early medieval epochs will accept that incorporating the detail to be drawn from the material and structural artefacts of those peoples and centuries is crucial to 'flesh out' the historical, text-focused image. Core questions can be answered through these physical remnants: churches and artworks can illuminate the investment and participation in religious affairs and show contacts and influences, either from the local Roman past or from neighbours; burials give insights into social organisation and hierarchies, while palaeopathologies of the deceased tell us something of lifestyles, diet and origins; domestic ceramics show workaday activities, home and regional economic technical skills and foodways; settlement forms can show planning, technical skills, community links; and so on. The key need is to build up, interrogate and interpret such archaeological data, since we otherwise run the risk of relying on crude images and reconstructions based on a limited suite of evidence gathered piecemeal in the past. But recent decades have, as many readers will know, seen more focused exploration of the late and post-classical to medieval periods in many parts of Europe, with more informed investigations and also targeted projects; and, of course, rescue archaeology has played a major part in generating new data, revealing new sites and burial grounds and opening many windows into

complex urban sequences. Combined with advances and better take-up in theoretical approaches by historical archaeologists, we can certainly affirm that the current generation of archaeologists – and archaeological scholars (since not all actually dig!) – is much more searching and questioning of the varied evidence. And the variety is important to stress, since archaeologists are well aware of the need to combine types of evidence to support arguments, to build more concrete images and to ask more informed questions.

Such new studies – and cross-fertilisation with historians – are growing, and for most parts of Europe readers will find books, projects, articles and debates on the archaeologies of the late antique to medieval periods; in some regions Late Antiquity may dominate, while in others early medieval is the fuller focus; in some areas burial data might remain the core source, whereas settlement archaeology still lags behind, chiefly due to the problems in tracing timber-and-post built sites in what can be busy and much disturbed modern landscapes. Personally, I have a special focus on archaeologies in Italy, but the last decade has seen me look much to work further westwards, in the Spanish Peninsula, from where a spate of publications and conferences, often tied to field projects (both rescue and research), have made this part of the Mediterranean and the old Roman world a very exciting arena of study and comparative analysis. This particular volume is a valuable new synthesis of much of this work, of related debates and ideas, and of ongoing issues in the Peninsula's late classical to early medieval centuries. Pilar Diarte-Blasco is an ideal young scholar to undertake this study, with her strong background in exploring – and always questioning – urban change and loss, rural transformations economic transitions and identity in the periods of late Roman, Suevic and Visigothic control, and with her archaeological experience expanded greatly beyond Spain through extended studies in Italy and the UK in particular. Her book will no doubt encourage many others to look to the Peninsula and to learn of the emerging evidence here for physical and social change, continuity, loss, resilience and identity across the 5th to 8th centuries AD.

Neil Christie
Professor of Medieval Archaeology
University of Leicester

Introduction

Late Antique and Early Medieval Hispania. Landscapes without Strategy? is a book about the development, the alterations and the continuities and discontinuities of the political, economic and, above all, socio-cultural traits of the Iberian Peninsula in a centuries-long period of transition. Central to my discussion are the transformations to the urban and rural landscapes of *Hispania*, across probably one of the most turbulent eras of the history of this region, namely between the decay and loss of Roman government and the arrival of Arab and Berber troops (*c.* AD 400–711). Terms such as 'late antique' and 'early medieval' can be, in many cases, interchangeable within these transformations, but are required here to stress the idea of two separate concepts: one related to the final stages of Antiquity and the classical world, and the end of a vast socio-economic organisation and its multifarious cultural norms; and the other marked by the emergence of a new Christian kingdom, the *regnum Visigothorum*, with its own particularities, and some inherited from the Late Roman Empire, some clearly linked with the Germanic horizon. However, although this division sounds straightforward enough (i.e. late Roman to Visigothic), the reality is far more complex: for example, it is difficult to determine exactly when we can consider 'Roman' *Hispania* to have become completely extinguished – is it when throngs of Suevi, Vandals and Alans penetrated the Peninsula? Or when the Visigoths settled in *Hispania*? Or is it when Rome herself fell in AD 476? Likewise, we need to recognise that the new kingdoms, both Visigothic and Suevic, were ones which drew on and settled around a 'native' and 'Romanised' population, who continued to form a majority of the population in the respective territories. Thus, we need to question roots, connections, visibilities, conflicts, acculturations and changes on diverse levels, including settlement, society, law, religion and material culture. When, might we ask, was *Hispania* fully 'Visigothic' – if at all? How uniform was the kingdom socio-culturally, or what differences existed between territories?

Accordingly, my analysis will start with the final century or so of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* – the province created following the major administrative and political reorganisation of the Empire under the

emperor Diocletian and the other Tetrarchs, which comprised the whole Iberian Peninsula, plus the Balearic Islands and a portion of Roman North Africa, namely *Mauretania Tingitana* (although this latter territory will not be part of this study). I will go from the relative ease of the 4th century to the disruption of the Roman provinces caused by military upheavals from the early 5th century, both internal, but, most significantly, also external, as new, barbarian[1] enemies penetrated Rome's Rhine frontier and very soon decided to cross the Pyrenees into the Hispanic province. This is also a moment when there was growing disaffection on the part of many inhabitants towards the Empire – this increasingly beset by economic and political problems, and traumatised by wider frontier issues, assailed by diverse barbarian groups, who also began the process of entering or threatening many parts of its territory. From the 5th century, in fact, the Iberian Peninsula became an intermittent war scene, an arena of internal conflict, local resistance and increasing barbarian takeovers of space. Much understudied, these politico-military troubles had a significant impact on both populations and places – whose archaeology I will trace in this volume.

Indeed, it is easy to imagine conflict and social tensions and anxieties amid all these upheavals, and materially there is related confusion. The Peninsula then sees a progressive stabilisation, even if with ongoing tensions, as these barbarian *gentes* were given or carved out their territories. The key figures that emerge at the end of the 5th century are, of course, the Visigoths, whose name and whose kingdom are synonymous with post-Roman and early medieval Spain. But they, too, gave way to a new power in the early 8th century, as *Hispania* became an Arab territory, one looking to the southern Mediterranean area and to the Near and Middle East rather than northwards; Islamic Spain – *Al Andalus* – would also create a distinctive and redesigned landscape.

However, it is important to recognise that the Visigoths were not alone in the Peninsula, since for some time they shared the territory with the Suevic Kingdom in the north-west (411–585), and with the Byzantine/East Roman/imperial province of *Spania*, occupying a narrow territory in the south-east (540s–625). In this volume there will be constant references to each of these political powers, but they are not the main objective of study and, frankly, the archaeological record for each is problematic and scarce, even if a very interesting assessment of the Byzantine presence from an archaeological point of view has recently been published (Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007). In contrast to material finds, historical information and debates about both the

Suevi and Byzantines have grown significantly and new studies exist (Díaz Martínez 2011a; Vallejo Girvés 2012), but doubts about how to read the material culture, its identification and classification remain a major challenge. Fortunately, the levels of available archaeological data related to this post-classical period and/or these centuries prior to the Middle Ages enable us to present, in a diachronic fashion, the characteristics of the social organisation, the productive potential, the settlement patterns and the continuity (or not) of their urban centres and the roles of these within the State. The approach to be employed here is interdisciplinary, exploiting and analysing various types of data (archaeological, environmental, geographical and textual) in order to interrogate and interpret the late antique and early medieval landscapes of *Hispania*.

Landscape transformations

Accordingly, across a period of over three centuries, this study will explore the radical transfiguration of this territory and its diverse peoples, analysing the settlement and landscape changes in a global perspective, combining evidence from rural and urban contexts and from cemeteries, plus environmental data, discarding orthodox and reductionist points of view, where such aspects are usually analysed independently and as isolated compartments.

Archaeologists, myself included, tend to talk about 'landscape' in seeking to give a sense of a whole, a global-scale study, which sometimes might confuse readers. It is thus worthwhile here outlining what is meant by landscape and by landscape archaeological approaches, which often, in ancient Mediterranean contexts, are not explicitly defined and theorised. In brief, the emergence and development of the field of Landscape Archaeology since 1950 in the UK and the important influences first from New Archaeology (1960s–1970s) with its geographical, statistical and sampling approaches, and then from Post-Processualism (1980s–1990s) with a more cultural perspective, have been core in enabling us to see and understand historic landscapes in their various guises (a notable recent approach is 'Historic Landscape Characterisation', see Turner 2006). There are variances outside the UK in Europe especially, however; thus, scholarship has identified three main schools of 'reading' the land: a French tradition based on functionalism and determinism heritage; a German one part-based on ethnicity, state, control and planning; and a Mediterranean (Spanish and Italian, especially) tradition based heavily on topography (Watteaux 2009). All these 'schools' share methods and techniques, but have evolved with different approaches. Nevertheless,

it is important to recognise that, as in all disciplines, Landscape Archaeology still has problems alongside its strengths. As Bintliff (1996, 247) pointed out, the first question is how we can understand landscape better than 'tracing varied ways of settling in it in different eras' and how we need multi-period and multi-specialist teams, adapting methodologies and sampling strategies to particular types of landscapes and forms of human behaviour or expression (recognising, for example, variances due to climatic, geographical, period, economic and other reasons). More broadly, there is surely a need for a common terminology and methodology to build a construct paradigm (Anschuetz *et al.* 2001); the terms 'landscape', 'environment' or 'ecology' can seem to mean different things to different scholars and projects.

I especially like the words of Tim Ingold (1993, 152–153), stating that

> for both the archaeologist and the native dweller, the landscape tells – or rather is – a story. It enfolds the lives and times of predecessors who, over the generations, have moved around in it and played their part in its formation. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, stored in the mind, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is pregnant with the past.

And because generations have moved around on, lived in and worked on these landscapes and left their traces, and future generations will continue doing so, so we keep on studying it, trying to learn more about our past and, maybe, our future.

In my own book, Landscape Archaeology will form one of the essential tools that I will exploit in order to unravel the archaeological record of the cultural spaces both active and inactive during those transitional centuries to the Middle Ages, from the socio-economic and institutional order of Antiquity to the formation of medieval feudalism. Viewing and interpreting the material residues of lived and culturalised territories over time permits us, often, to gain a deeper understanding of the historical processes that prompted the socio-economic changes we can observe. But my research questions are not just about the visibility and tangibility of these changes in the landscape and the nature of the related archaeology, they are also about what types of new authority were created by these powers and how these are evident through changing patterns of social organisation both in the rural landscapes and in the townscapes. Were there clear and dramatic differences from the older, Roman settlement forms? Was there a visible strategy in this new organisation of space,

lands and people? Did powers like the Visigothic kings really control the landscape or was this more fragmented? Exploring these diverse aspects is fundamental for assessing landscape modifications and continuities across late antique and early medieval *Hispania*. As importantly, the archaeology offers a powerful – if not always clear – voice to add to and even challenge the textual image that often still prevails for the study period.

The post-Roman centuries: what we know, and what we still do not know

Core to this period of change is the arrival in *Hispania* of heterogeneous groups of so-called barbarians, their settlement in the Peninsula and their coexistence with the local Romanised populations. Until fairly recently, any study of the impact of these new groups in towns and country was impossible, because information was very limited or wholly biased towards burial finds or churches. However, the levels and modes of relevant period research have grown significantly in the last decade especially – catching up with trends already active and tested in countries like England for Anglo-Saxon archaeology and Italy for Lombard archaeology – with efforts to consider not just Visigothic archaeology and history, but also to seek those of other *gentes* and powers (i.e. the Suevi, Vandals and Byzantines) and of the Hispano-Roman substratum. Here I summarise some of the key research and trends within modern Visigothic-period scholarship.

From the historiographical perspective, as noted, an intense focus has occurred with regard to 'peripheral' domains, such as the Byzantine territories and the Suevic Kingdom, and, in the last 30 years, to the Visigothic Kingdom. However, for much of the 20th century, not only during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco but also afterwards, scholars sought links between the idea of a national unity of Spain and its relationship with the Christian and centralised monarchy of the Visigoths (Hillgarth 1985; Díaz Martínez 2008). Indeed, Visigothic rule was the first time that the Iberian Peninsula was unified, since Roman *Hispania* was (arguably) a group of large provinces belonging to a 'foreign' Empire. Good examples of this view were the (prolific) works of Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz (a strong selection is collected in a volume in 1979), with a clear Spanish nationalistic backdrop in which the Hispano-Visigothic is an 'historic community', a model of the later Kingdom of Asturias and the *desired* Castilian unification; and the studies of his heir, José Orlandis (1977;

1988), who specialised in canon law and studied Visigothic institutions and culture. Yet it is the figure of Sánchez-Albornoz who has been recognised as giving a notable impetus to the study of ancient to medieval law, including Visigothic, founding the journal *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* in 1924. In fact, one prominent paper to note from this journal is on 'La Lex Visigothorum y sus manuscritos. Un ensayo de reinterpretación' (Díaz y Díaz 1976a), which remains a cutting-edge study for Visigothic jurisprudence, even though it was revisited and expanded 20 years later by García López (1995).

From the 1960s–1970s onwards, Spanish historiography moved away from national myths and the scenario changed considerably with the appearance of many important studies, such as those by A. Barbero and M. Vigil (1978), who rejected the idea of Spain as an historic and cultural unity based on the Iberian Peninsula. Their *La formación del feudalismo en la Península Ibérica* (The Formation of Feudalism in the Iberian Peninsula) is probably the key element in this shift, which includes other scholars, such as L. A. García Moreno (1974; 1975), who had a specific interest in the final stages of the Visigothic Kingdom. In many cases, these studies (for a detailed bibliographical essay on these, see Ferreiro 1988, with later updates in 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2014) called for careful re-reading of the contemporary texts, as was done with the *Consularia Caesaraugustana* and the writings of John of Biclar (ed. Cardelle de Hartman 2001), as well as hagiographic works, such as the *Liber Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* (ed. Maya 1992; recently, ed. Velázquez Soriano 2008). However, although the bibliography has grown significantly since, probably the key study for this period is the volume published in 1999 and edited by Peter Heather: *The Visigoths. From the Migration Period to the Seventh Century. An Ethnographic Perspective*, which includes, among others, papers by Pablo de la Cruz Díaz Martínez, Ian Wood and Isabel Velázquez Soriano. Here, the Visigoths are analysed as a socio-political and military construct, previously separated like other groups from the common root of Goths during the 4th century, who were first subordinates of the Empire, and in time settled in south-west France in AD 418 as federated allies, before forging an independent political entity, extending their power through the Iberian Peninsula and shaping a kingdom, chiefly from the reign of King Euric (466–484). The Visigothic monarchy and its political structure, Visigothic society (including relations with the Hispano-Roman population), the relevance of the Church and the economy are thoroughly studied in this invaluable edited volume, in which

Archaeology appear as an essential element of discussion and interpretation.

This revisionist approach has been evident not only in Spain, notably with the works of scholars such as the above-mentioned P. C. Díaz Martínez (2007; 2011a) and Javier Arce (2005; 2011), but also beyond, with the contributions of Roger Collins (2004) offering a socio-political and military overview, Rachel L. Stocking (2000) shedding new light on the determinant role of the Catholic Church, especially seen in the Councils and their canons, and Jamie P. Wood (2012), who has focused on the figure of Isidore of Seville, not only as the father of the medieval Spanish Church, but also as an essential figure of mediation between kings, nobles and the population in the early 7th century.

The development of research in Visigothic archaeology stands out somewhat from the historiographical one, and yet it was long active only to support the analysis of the literary sources. The first moments of this discipline can be considered part of a wider discourse of German historicism of the second half of the 19th century. By the early 20th century, indeed, archaeological findings of this late and post-Roman period were always related to 'Gothicism', as part of the rediscovery of a 'folk', with a common culture and language, fundamental for the construction of the Germanic identity and contributing to the current European movements of exaltation of the national values. With the studies by Gustaf Kossinna (1920) as the inspiration, the interpretation of the Visigoths as an homogenous ethnic and cultural group based mainly on specific markers of their culture (such as eagle brooches, belt buckles and other personal adornments) was initially key to the development of Spanish Archaeology and of Early Medieval Studies, which viewed these 'migrations' as the crucial elements and moments of change and transformation of the antique world.

From the 1920s, archaeological investigations/explorations – and it is important to bear in mind that Archaeology was at that stage still a very young science – were undertaken by the Junta Superior de Excavaciones y Antigüedades and, especially, by the archaeologists Blas Taracena in various sites of the Soria province (1924–1925), by Julio Martínez de Santa-Olalla (1933) in Herrera del Pisuerga (Palencia) and by Cayetano de Mergelina (1948–1949) at the iconic site of Carpio de Tajo, to name the best-known ones. Such excavations inaugurated the study of the period and the barbarian groups on the basis of their necropoleis and grave goods, with the focus very much turned to identifying Germanic aspects (for an overview of this

emphasis and a critique of the historiographical construction related to Spanish nationalism and its roots in Castilla – where most of these necropoleis were found – see Olmo-Enciso 1991; Olmo-Enciso and Castro Priego 2011).

For a number of decades, the classification and interpretative scheme formulated by Martínez de Santa-Olalla (1934a; 1934b) were core to most of studies of the Visigothic period, bolstered further by the Austrian researcher Wilhelm Reinhart (1945), who defined the primary location of this population in the Central Meseta. The ethnic – almost racist – perspective and scheme of Martínez de Santa-Olalla (one can note that, when Himmler travelled to Spain, Martínez de Santa-Olalla was among the group of people who accompanied him on various cultural and artistic visits) was based on chrono-typological divisions between the 5th and the 8th centuries, and he was able to assign most of the materials in a 'pure Gothic'/'*puramente gótico*' horizon.

After the Spanish Civil War and the end of Second World War, it is interesting to observe how this chronological period and its archaeology lost its appeal, and Visigothic studies seem to have undergone a significant decline, partly because the 'Germanist' theories had lost their attraction. Thus, until the 1980s, the Martínez Santa-Olalla and Reinhart hypotheses remained the basis of most Visigothic archaeological research, finally focused on burials and typological studies of its grave goods. However, among this 'traditional' scholarship there emerged the figure of Pere de Palol (1950; 1956), who first identified the need to incorporate into these studies the underlying and hidden Hispano-Roman population; indeed, he was the first to talk about the 'Hispano-Visigothic' world/Peninsula and, on many levels, to encourage a move away from strongly ethnic interpretations. It is no coincidence that the first notable re-evaluation of how we should study these grave goods and necropoleis came from his pupil/disciple, Gisella Ripoll López (1989; 1991). Ripoll López, influenced by the emergent ethnogenesis theories – which, in their debates of acculturation and symbiosis, offered a polyethnic character to the Goths (see Wenskus 1961; Pohl 2002) – presented a much-modified approach to these necropoleis and their populations, seeking to map spatial organisations in these and to understand their social organisation. The chrono-typological character of the necropoleis, however, formed the basis of her study, and this approach was retained for a long time in her diverse studies.

The close consideration of cemeteries as reflectors of part of a settlement organisation, and ultimately of a territory in which social

relations were developed with (potentially) diverse populations and working groups, was proposed some years later by Olmo-Enciso (1992), who argued that a plural cultural reality characterised *Hispania* in this period; he emphasised also the important regional differences in the Peninsula, which in some way were maintained from pre-Roman times. In fact, the revision of the so-called 'Visigothic Theory', supported by the 'Visigothic cemeteries' (burials and their grave goods, contrasting with the majority of unfurnished burial grounds in the rest of the Iberian Peninsula of the same era), which served exclusively to identify the Visigothic *gentes*, has only really been questioned recently. Thus, Antonel Jepure (2009) has argued that, in the current state of knowledge, we must reevaluate the archaeological information, bearing in mind that the differences between Romans and acculturated Goths – integrated in the Empire for a long time, as Palol stressed – were probably very scarce and impossible to distinguish archeologically. In that sense, the furnished cemeteries detected in Central Spain are still an open question. This has stirred new interest and debate, which is something fuelled by a better or more diverse archaeology, since, in the last two decades, we can look to the results of excavations in both town and country, of farms and silos which, vitally, are starting to provide a much more complex but, at the same time, more balanced picture of the period, as I will demonstrate in this volume. In that sense, the recent incorporation of rural contexts and an interest in peasants and their socio-economic organisation have helped to invigorate the discussion, thanks above all to works such as those of Enrique Ariño Gil (2006; 2013), Juan Antonio Quirós Castillo (2007; 2013a) and Alfonso Vigil-Escalera (2007; 2009). It is still difficult to unravel the relationship between those rural groups and the elite and the administrative centres, such as hilltop sites, towns and cities, but an important number of urban excavations, such as Mérida (Mateos Cruz 2000; Mateos Cruz and Alba Calzado 2000; Alba Calzado 2014a) and Valencia (Ribera i Lacomba 2008), as well as the Visigothic 'new town' of *Reccopolis* (Olmo-Enciso 2015), are enabling clearer image of town–rural links.

In fact, such new archaeology in *Hispania* (see the overview in Diarte-Blasco 2016) – as also in other Mediterranean contexts – facilitates the analysis of the urban development and change during these centuries, of the end of the Roman *villae* system and the reorganisation of the countryside, and of the emergence of new types of settlement – from hamlets and villages in the plains and valleys to hilltop sites; there are also data that help us understand the

environment and changes to aspects such as resources and to climate. Combined with historical and textual evidence, we can better understand emergent socio-economic relationships and also question the role of religion (i.e. the Church) in these transformations. How all these aspects converge and create a renewed and more revealing picture of the landscapes and inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages is the key story to be told in this book.

The structure of this study

The organisation of this study is intended to cover this transitional period and is divided into three main themes (I. *Hispania* (AD 400–711). An Historical, Archaeological and Geographical Background, II. Landscapes Without Strategy? and III. Peopling the Landscape) in which the natural, physical, historical and social changes of the urban and rural landscapes are analysed from an archaeological point of view, employing, as said, various types of data.

Part I introduces readers to Iberia between the 4th and 8th centuries AD and comprises two chapters: 'The Iberian Peninsula: A Land of Multiple Landscapes?' and 'The Last Decades of the Western Roman Empire and the Processes of Disengagement'. The first of these focuses on the physical landscape and integrates geographical information and the availability of natural resources (*e.g.* environmental data such as water resources, vegetation and woodlands; plus archaeobiological data). I will outline the available historical and palaeo-environmental data for Late Antiquity and the medieval periods.

The second chapter is an historical assessment, in which the last phase of the Western Roman Empire is analysed – its social organisation, its economical functioning and political and administrative mechanisms – in a territory, the Iberian Peninsula, that had witnessed a fairly strong urbanism, with a strong eastern coastal emphasis, and a very busy landscape, which without doubt made its mark in the organisation and characteristics of the subsequent kingdoms. From this chapter we see how *Hispania* was less affected by the so-called Third Century Crisis than other Roman territories, but, as elsewhere, it suffers in the breakdown of the Roman state in the 5th century. The process of the arrival and settlement of the new *gentes* between the 5th and 8th centuries AD and their relation with the Hispano-Roman population are also presented from sources like Hydatius and Isidore of Seville, who provide information on conflicts, kings and the Church in this period.

Part II forms the core of the book, exploring the archaeological data related to the evolution of settlement patterns in the Peninsula and the principal trends of change. As noted above, our study period of this volume covers three centuries of upheaval, change and politico-cultural redefinition. Part II will thus seek to show how far these apparently turbulent times are – or are not – reflected in the town and country. It will also identify the current quality of the archaeology for these. There are two chapters: 'Building the Urban Picture in Late Antique *Hispania*' and 'Far from the Ancient *Villae*: New Forms of Habitat in Rural Contexts'. The first (Chapter 3) will analyse towns and cities, including aspects such as town size, monumental growth, public infrastructures and so on. In *Hispania*, transformations in these centres show an irregular evolution, but coincide in the common trend to reuse old public spaces. That means the 'invasion' of key urban spaces such as the *forum*, entertainment buildings and baths, by domestic structures or by productive areas dedicated to metallurgy, ceramic production or quarrying; but we see also the construction or renewal of city walls and the appearance of new types of buildings, such as the episcopal complexes, churches and other buildings related to Christianity, which were fundamental units in the construction of a new townscape.

Chapter 4 will focus on rural landscapes and settlement patterns (villages, *vici*, secondary agglomerations, etc.). I will present here an overview of the most significant studies in settlement patterns in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, trying to draw together the main results and issues so far and offer an informed idea at least of the socio-economic and settlement dynamics in Spain in these transitional centuries. The chapter presents both a full breakdown of the old Roman settlement hierarchies and a discussion of the foundation of a new type of landscape organisation, one articulated by a fairly dense network of villages and, furthermore, the activation of the so-called hilltop sites as new control foci in the territory. These landscape transformations reveal a great diversity and complexity across the Peninsula, variously affected by the different power groups that prevailed, notably the Visigoths in the core of Iberia, the Suevi in the north-west and the Byzantine military province in the south-east – to name just the most stable of these polities. Such territorial compartmentalisation had in fact already existed during Roman rule, but this intensified in the Early Middle Ages; this fact alone impacts on efforts to generate a coherent vision of the process.

Part III comprises three chapters, in which the social dimension of landscapes is studied in order to seek to identify the principal agents

in these processes. The first (Chapter 5), 'Identifying Post-Classical Populations in the Archaeological Record', will focus on the agency of these changes. The vast majority of current studies put attention on the materiality of the modifications and their functional implications, but with a general ignorance of – or failure to question – the agencies of this process. In other words, the intentionality or agency of the individuals and/or collective in these processes are evaluated. Hence my own critical and theoretical approach to analyse these transformations, considering especially the role of human actors in promoting or forcing changes.

In Chapter 6, 'Christian Leaders? Impacts on Town, Country and People', I address the 'symbolic' or 'ritual' view of landscape. But sacred spaces were not the only ones in this new reality, since new populations settled with a new aristocracy were also part of these changes. I will explore the rates of Christianisation and consider the first communities of the new religion and their coexistence with pagans, their insertion in urban contexts – first in the suburbs and then in the urban cores – the slow appearance of churches in the rural contexts and the role of monasteries and parish churches in this process.

In the last chapter of Part III, 'Ethnic Landscapes? Between Natives and Incomers', readers will understand why the Iberian Peninsula in Late Antiquity provides a strong case study of the process of the arrival of the new barbarian populations and their interaction with the late Roman provincial people. The theoretical questions concerning the link between these incomers and the Roman population, the new religion and the new forms of authority are fundamental for the kinds of cultural systems that affected *Hispania*'s landscapes and its survivals and transformations. Using diverse archaeological data, including burial evidence, I seek to assess whether we can identify new landscape ownership associated with incoming powers.

To conclude, the last chapter 'Landscapes of Power and the New Social Organisation of Early Medieval *Hispania*' summarises what we have learnt of the social organisation of the changing Hispanic landscape. In the Iberian Peninsula, the early to mid-5th century is the moment of the collapse of the late Roman rural system and of deeper transformations in the urban contexts. In this final chapter, I will assess the role of the Hispano-Roman population and of the new Visigothic elites in this revised social and physical landscape, and draw together the diverse evidence types to offer a coherent reconstruction of social and settlement organisation. I will also emphasise the theoretical questions concerning the transformations of

the landscape, the links between these and the incomers and the original population, new forms of authority and changed patterns of social organisation in the landscape. These, as we will see, are essential for assessing cultural, environmental and settlement adaptations and impositions.

Note

1 In this book, I use the term 'barbasrians' mainly as a recognisable historical construct, but used without any cultural/moral value attached. I understand that this term could be viewed as problematic to define the wide amalgam of people that (are generally agreed as having) moved and settled in this period of the late Roman and early Byzantine period, but it forms a distinguishable concept to facilitate my discussion. See Halsall 2007, 10-19, for basic discussion of term.

Part I

Hispania (AD 400–711). An historical, archaeological and geographical background

Chapter 1

The Iberian Peninsula: a land of multiple landscapes?

Hispania: a geographic and topographic description

The Iberian Peninsula, located in the south-west corner of Europe, comprises two modern counties, Spain and Portugal, and covers an area of approximately 582,000 km^2, making it Europe's second largest peninsula (behind Scandinavia). It is separated from France by the mountain range of the Pyrenees, which acts as a natural border, while the southern area of the Peninsula is separated from the north-west coast of Africa by the Mediterranean Sea and the narrow Strait of Gibraltar, just *c*. 15 km wide. It is flanked on the south-east and east by the Mediterranean Sea, and on the north, west and south-west by the Atlantic Ocean. Indeed, the fact that the Peninsula lies between Europe and Africa creates notable influences in terms of surrounding environments and climatology; its position in the Atlantic, African and European plates, together with its tectonic evolution, also creates a particular variation and a diversity of landscapes.

Topographic variability is one of the main characteristics of the Iberian Peninsula, with several ranges of mountain chains and basins distributed across all its territory (De Vicente Muñoz and Vegas 2007). The Pyrenees, the Cantabrian Range, the Sistema Central-Cadena Ibérica and the Sierra Morena (from north to south) are the larger main systems of mountain ranges (with a very high mean topography, of *c*. 700 m, the second highest in Europe, after Switzerland). In general, there is some sense of order in the placement of the mountains, plains and the sedimentation basins (Vegas 2006), which have an E–W orientation, except for a group of mountains in the centre of Portugal and the western area of Asturias and the south of Galicia, with a N/NW–S/ SE direction, and the Cadena Ibérica, with a

NW–SE orientation.

The fluvial network of the Peninsula comprises seven main basins: Ebro, Duero, Tajo, Guadiana, Guadalquivir, Jucar and Segura. The rivers Duero, Tajo, Guadiana and Guadalquivir flow out into the Atlantic Ocean, while the others run to the Mediterranean Sea. Apart from these, hydrological resources are in fact quite limited in the Peninsula, with relatively few lakes or other kinds of water deposits and wetlands.

The geological structure and the Mediterranean climate – one characterised by scarce wet winters and dry and warm-hot summers – which affect most of the Peninsula, are fundamental for the formation of rivers, usually with severe baseflow (almost always during the summer months) and a limited hydrological flow. These characteristics, however, do not affect the North and North-western territories of the Peninsula (modern-day Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, País Vasco/Basque Country and the northern areas of Navarra, Aragón and Cataluña), the so-called 'Wet Spain', with a higher rainfall and deciduous forests. Indeed, it is possible to divide the Peninsula into three main biogeographical regions (Costa *et al.* 1990; López 1994) to better understand the conformation of the Iberian landscapes: a) an Atlantic zone, located in the north and north-west of Spain, with deciduous forests comparable to central Europe; b) a Mediterranean zone, characterised by a higher ratio of droughts, with *Pinus* and evergreen *Quercus* forests, species related to anthropic action such as olives, vines and, of course, cereals, located in the south and south-east of the Peninsula; and c) the Inner peninsular areas, where aridity and harsh thermal conditions are the main characteristics in a landscape featuring pine and holm oak forests, pastures, as well as cultivated land of cereals, vines and olives.

This complex picture of the Peninsula is useful to help us to visualise a Roman *Hispania* with a very variegated mosaic of landscapes, with richer vegetation and significant winter rains in the north that gradually disappear as one moves southwards, where, by contrast, conditions are warmer and less humid and where dry-farming is more common. We will see how the Romans intensified farming activity and resource exploitation in the Peninsula; we will, however, question how far the post-classical landscapes of *Hispania* differed and see what changes were wrought by the powers that came after Rome.

A palaeo-environmental approach: vegetation, wildlife and natural resources

All these landscapes converge to create a mixture of different spaces: from the wet and verdant North-West territory and Cantabrian fringe to the drier and arid Central Plateau, from the steep and winter snowy Pyrenees and Baetic mountains to the fertile Guadalquivir and Ebro valleys, just to name the most representative areas. Fortunately, in recent years, archaeobiological research in Spain has evolved significantly – although it is important to note that data remain scarce for certain zones and periods – giving a clearer, more detailed image of the natural settings into which new groups moved and came to control after Rome's decay in the West from the early 5th century. Such studies now allow us to assert that the great diversity of landscapes from Roman to medieval times was characterised by a generally strong continuity, with an agriculture dominated by cereals, supplemented by legumes and domesticated fruits (a detailed study of seeds and fruits is in Peña-Chocarro *et al.* 2017).

In Roman times, regional differences in farming are evident from one area to another, above all in the north-west zones, where millet and hulled wheats (especially emmer and spelt) were prominent, whereas in the rest of the Peninsula we mainly find hulled barley and naked wheats. Noticeably, naked barley was fairly common in the ancient *Gallaecia* province (which, in our study period, was part of the Suevic Kingdom), but did not appear elsewhere in the Hispanic territories. Rye played a limited role in this and the Catalan region. In addition, during the Roman period, legume cultivation was present in many regions, except in the Central Iberian Plateau – extending to the Portuguese central and southern regions – and the Cantabrian fringe, where data are absent.

Arboriculture, intensely developed by Romans, included figs, grapes and olives, appearing almost always in the Peninsula's Mediterranean regions. In Andalusia, especially important was olive production, as in eastern areas of current Valencia and Murcia regions, while in the northern area, from East to West, olive cultivation were less common. This situation largely persisted during Late Antiquity, with a similar use of cereals (only spelt seems to disappear, while cultivation of rye and emmer were also present in the central area of the Peninsula), although, as we will see below, we can trace a significant drop in productivity, probably caused by lower temperatures.

By contrast, between the 5th and 8th centuries legumes were cultivated primarily along the eastern coast (current Catalan and Valencian regions). In this area, indeed, vines and olives continue today as typical products, crucial in many local economies. However,

it is possible to document a decrease in the production of figs. In addition, before the arrival of the Islamic troops in the 8th century, we find that some cultivated fruits that had been common in Roman times disappeared, such as apple, cherry, peach and pomegranate, but revived in medieval times (Peña-Chocarro *et al*. 2017). However, in some areas, such as the Spanish Central system, between the Tagus and Duero valleys, a new variety of olive (*Olea europaea*) and sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) appeared in this period, even though there were few new crops introduced in these centuries (Blanco-González *et al*., 2015).

When we refer to the main foodstuffs consumed, we tend to forget – chiefly because it is very difficult to retrieve archaeological documentation of those activities – that in many areas of the Peninsula, in both the Roman and early medieval periods, hunting, fishing and gathering (of fruit, nuts, etc.) was probably an integral part of many inhabitants' diet, especially in mountainous areas. To this group of 'forest' foodstuffs, we should add honey (Crane 1983; 1992), which was a product in great demand, used medicinally as well as for sweet flavouring (such as for wine). Since Iberic (Iron Age) times, honey production is well attested in the Peninsula, and also in Roman and post-classical times it was probably a valuable natural resource, above all in places less suited to traditional farming, such as in mountainous or arid zones (Fernández Uriel 1988).

In terms of livestock, in the Roman period this area of farming was characterised by cattle, sheep/goat and pigs; there do not appear to be important changes in animal husbandry practices in Late Antiquity or in the Early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, a significant change in animal sizes over time has been documented in the Peninsula, as registered for many sites of the central area (mainly, from the Madrid region), the Basque Country and the Catalan territory (Grau-Sologestoa 2015). Data for other European regions reveal how many domesticates increased in size between the Iron Age and the Roman periods, while a decreasing trend came in post-classical times, persisting until the late medieval era (see Holmes 2014). In *Hispania*, the situation seems comparable, but it is difficult to ascertain if this process was by chance or planned, although farmers surely sought to preserve and enhance their meat, wool and milk production and/or traction forces. Potentially, this size reduction responds to a process of feralisation, with resultant 'free range' animals, or is linked to an intensification of agrarian activities (see Giovannini 1997; Grau-Sologestoa 2015). It is complicated, however, to try and understand why peasants may have decided (if at all) to ease pressure in meat production and, by

contrast, to enhance cultivated areas; here it is vital also to consider pollen analysis and palaeoclimatic data in general to understand better the characteristics of these modifications in human pressures (or lack of) on the landscape and how this could have impacted on livestock management and agrarian production.

The evidence of palaeoclimatic data

The Iberian Peninsula, like the rest of the Mediterranean Basin, saw a progressive Roman conquest and Romanisation, which brought many deep transformations in the social, cultural and economic spheres (for a recent review of the concept of Romanisation, with its multiple actors and characteristics, these often dependent on the character and content of each territory, see Santos Yanguas and Cruz Andreotti 2012). The new political rules, cultural systems and moral values, the building projects of and in cities and the colonisation of lands coincided with a phase in Holocene called the Roman Warm period, between 250 bc and AD 450 (Lamb 1995; Desprat *et al.* 2003), which is widely argued to have favoured an increase in land productivity.

The environmental impact of Romanisation featured, among other processes, a general process of deforestation (the consumption of wood under Rome for military activity, fuel, building materials and transport especially is well known; see Hughes 1994) and an associated intensive cultivation and processing of crops in the lowlands, as evident across much of the Peninsula; but even high-altitude resources were not neglected, since the Pyrenees, the Central System and the Iberian ranges were strongly exploited for grazing, mining, charcoal production, forestry, but also hunting (Orejas Saco del Valle 1996; Ruiz del Árbol 2005; Palet *et al.* 2010; 2014; López-Sáez *et al.* 2014). This productive trend, indeed, persisted into the 6th and 7th centuries in the Pre-Pyrenees (Riera *et al.* 2004), where studies have documented woodland clearance, charcoal burning and an extension of terracing for crops such as olive trees, cereals and hemp – this fitting with textual sources reporting farming and resource usage here still in Visigothic times (Ariño Gil and Díaz Martínez 2003). Other activities well attested during both Roman rule and the Visigothic period include the production of resin in some valleys of the Pyrenees (with some furnaces attested as still in use until the 9th century) (Palet *et al.* 2014).

Our study period is not just one of transition from Roman to Visigothic control, but also a climatic transition, since there was a significant change in the weather/ temperature due to the so-called 'Early Medieval Cold Episode' (AD 450–950). This 'episode' was

characterised by lower temperatures and greater aridity across the Mediterranean basin (whereas in northern Europe conditions were wetter than in the preceding period). In fact, some studies maintain that mean annual temperatures decreased, from the 2nd to 6th century, by *c.* 1–1.5°C (*e.g.* Hoffmann 2014).

In different areas of the Iberian Peninsula (Fig. 1), such as in the North-West (Desprat *et al.* 2003; Muñoz Sobrino *et al.* 2005; 2007), in the Northern Plateau (López Merino *et al.* 2009), in the wetlands of the Tablas de Daimiel in the Southern Plateau (Gil García *et al.* 2006), to name just a few, it is possible to see the effects of the end of the Roman climatic optimum, marked potentially by agricultural change and damage as a result of the heightened aridity, and a degradation of soils and of the plant environment. Instead, we can see the extension of birch forests in almost all pollen records favoured by cold temperatures (López-Sáez *et al.* 2014) and we observe a development of extensive farming, this facilitating the introduction of rye and a diversification of crops, such as olive and sweet chestnut. This situation is clearly related to large deforestation strategies across many parts of the Iberian Peninsula (especially in montane areas) during the Visigothic period (López Sáez *et al.* 2009), plus a heightened emphasis on livestock grazing. This deforestation process was probably related to the increasing aridity, but also to an increase in felling and fires (for charcoal, as recorded in pollen analysis). Such were probably in connection with a minor breeding (penned) activity – and more grazing – and the need of breaking up new fields for cereal farming, because the former ones were not really productive enough, and to diversify the resources (Blanco-González *et al.* 2015).

It is interesting to view the mix of human impact and pressure in the landscape alongside the climatic variability in considering change. Indeed, a multi-proxy study, employing among other methods pollen analysis, study of biotic remains and sedimentology, was undertaken in central Spain (Currás *et al.* 2012) at the marl lake of Somolinos (Guadalajara), close to the Roman urban sites of Termes and Uxama (both of these, noticeably, abandoned before the onset of the Middle Ages). This project has shown that, in general, there was a climatically driven increase or reduction of the lake, which indicates that the human impact in the landscape was not the first element in the reduction or increase in moisture availability. The data obtained revealed that an expansion of cereal-based agriculture and an intensification of felling – with a reduction of the pine forest – occurred in *c.* 1st century bc, together with an increase in mining activities; then, during the 2nd to 4th centuries, when higher water

levels are attested, there still was an increase of farming and grazing, with a new decline in forests (pines, oaks, etc.). By the 4th century, however, there was a reduction of farming activity, which could be related to changing climatic conditions, but it could equally relate to failing demand from the failing Roman towns. Indeed, this and the next century are marked by a decline in lake levels, culminating in the almost complete disappearance of the lake and the formation of wetlands, perhaps by the 7th century; this coincided with a recovery in pinewood cover, probably related to diminished presence and pressure in the landscape, with reduced grazing and cereal agriculture.

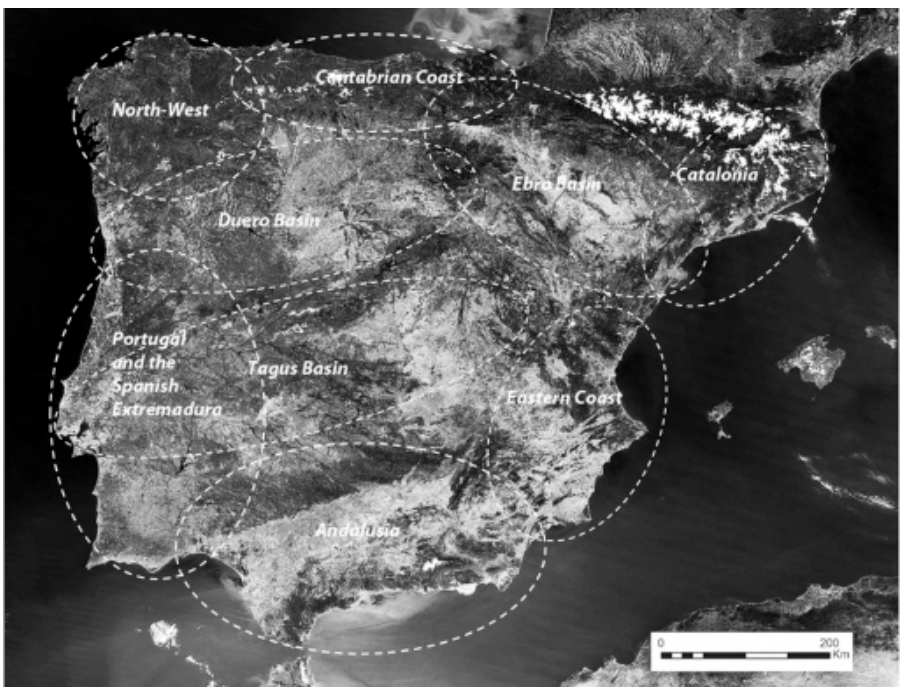

Figure 1. The Iberian Peninsula: the nine main geographical areas discussed in the text (image by P. Diarte-Blasco).

In southern Spain, a study in Lake Zóñar in Córdoba province identified a similar sequence, with a humid and highly productive phase across the Iberian and Roman periods, whereas, by the end of the 4th century, a progressive drop in the lake level occurred. In this area, the arid period seems to extend into the early 7th century, and then several episodes of drought are observed until *c.* AD 1200 that countered the recovery of higher lake levels (Martín-Puertas *et al.* 2008).

Colonisation, territory and physical change: a process halted under the Visigoths?

Seemingly, therefore, changed climatic conditions played a role in the modification of the landscape, hand in hand, perhaps, with the failure of Roman rule and the loss of its substantial economic system of supply and demand. Indeed, Rome's landscape role had, for many parts of *Hispania*, been substantial – new colonist and farmers, new ways of organising the landscape, the input of *villas*, external demands, intensification of production processes, and also the creation of a stable road network.

The landscape transformations generated under Roman rule are well known, not only via archaeological studies but also in part via texts/treatises from agronomists such as Cato, Varro and Columella, from whom an idealised representation of the landscape and its potential was transmitted. We can also draw on the treatise on land surveying collected in the so-called *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanorum* (Toneatto 1983; 1992; Castillo Pascual 1996), which was probably commissioned in the Flavian period, although the first redaction as a compendium did not happen before the end of the 5th century, or even in the 6th (and a second compilation came in the late 6th or the early 7th century); such texts reveal the theoretical framework of the Roman agrarian structure. However, most of the information from the *Corpus* and other texts regarding the different modes of colonial foundation and land distribution almost always relates to the Roman Republican period, whereas information for the Empire is scarcer; and for the Republican centuries, any land grant agreements were mostly exclusively associated with newly founded Roman colonies and army veterans (for a full analysis of territorial management, with especial reference to *Hispania,* see Ariño Gil *et al*. 2004).

For the colonies, but probably also in other kinds of urban centres, the surrounding landscape was structured, usually by means of a *centuratio* – in other words, an ordered land division comprising the system of *centuriae* usually square in shape and 20 *actus* on each side (a modern equivalent of almost 710 m long), though sometimes these blocks were of rectangular form and of other sizes. Colonists were given designated blocks of land; in origin, town-dwellers were also farmers and landholders, though, over time, some focused on the city, others expanded in the landscape. In an idealised picture, the Roman agrarian economy was organised around a central *villa* surrounded by its *fundus*, made up of contiguous fields, variously cultivated and generating a surplus for the urban market. In reality, however, such *fundus* comprised perhaps a core block of lands, plus scattered plots,

dispersed in the territory and not often regular blocks, being adapted in many cases to the topography.

The creation and establishment of *villae* as the main elements of landscape engagement without doubt form the principal characteristic of Roman rural settlement in nearly all provinces of the Empire. From the Roman Republican period in some areas of *Hispania*, such as the coastal ones (chiefly near the port cities) – and in the rest of the Peninsula from the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius – this process was fundamental for local sustenance, but also for speculative exploitation via investment in an agriculture based on olives, vines and cereals. And we should not forget other activities that perhaps went on independent of the *villae*: some villages and small towns exploited the countryside directly – above all, via extensive farming and the rearing of livestock, such as sheep and cattle – as evident in some areas of the *Baetica* region; while in the North-West, some hilltop sites came to perform an active role in the agrarian activity, seemingly overlapping with some *villae* in the 5th century (Ariño Gil and Díaz Martínez 1999). Some of these may have been independent farmers, that is, not dependent on a *villa* estate owner, although it is hard for us, without any documentation, to understand how farms, hamlets and villages related to *villas* in terms of, for example, rents, dues, labour and so on.

As we will see in Chapter 4, the *villa* system had a special prominence during the 4th century, when many of the high elite residences were sumptuously decorated and the phenomenon of a concentration of land properties was more evident (Chavarría Arnau 2007a). However, this scenario was somewhat short-lived, albeit two or three generations long, since, towards the end of this century and the first decades of the 5th century, the situation changed drastically. As I will outline in Chapter 2, the Roman elite faced not just a changing climate, but also an unstable scenario with regular warfare and, most significantly, conflict and change following the arrival and settlement of new 'barbarian' masters in the Peninsula; as these uncertainties multiplied, many *villae* went out of use.

One possibility is that, despite Roman imperial decline, the tradition of the Roman land surveyors was maintained (indeed, as seen, the first compilation of the *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanorum* took place in north Italy in this period). However, it is difficult to understand if this knowledge was really related to actual work in the fields/on the ground or was simply an academic exercise – for example, when the 7th-century scholar Isidore of Seville (*Etym.* XV, 13–15) relates some of the principal concepts (*actus*, *iugerum*, *centuria*, *limites*, etc.) and uses of the *agrimensores*, is he simply showing off his

classical knowledge and reading? And yet the *Lex Visigothorum* (X, 3, 1–5) seems to verify that many laws issued by the new Visigothic kings tried to maintain the ancient *termini* and thereby, presumably, also the previous organisation of the landscape (see Ariño Gil *et al.* 2004, 185–187).

In this regard it is important to bear in mind that the successor powers to Rome, in a number of cases, did not forcibly take all lands from the Roman provincials, but rather were 'accommodated'. Thus, in the Iberian Peninsula and in Italy, the pact of *hospitalitas* for the Goths (Visigoths and Ostrogoths respectively) included the right to two-thirds of the land, although we do not know whether such land grants/awards were public and/or private properties (Goffart 1980, 116–122; Díaz Martínez 1994, 468–469). Nor do we know whether the Gothic leaders fully controlled this partitioning, or whether Gothic nobility took a majority share and then subdivided with their followers. We must assume that, generally, some of the native population continued to work the lands and to use old/existing property divisions and field boundaries. But that continuity may have not been consistent, and some areas perhaps saw more change, linked to *villa* loss or earlier changes in land use and control.

To cite one well-known example, at *Tarraco* (Tarragona), it is possible to see an overlap between medieval agrarian organisational forms and the Roman centuriation network, although there were some 'deformations' to the module, as a result of adaptations to the physical environment (ravines, lakes, etc.). However, some aspects were changed – or reinforced – such as drove roads or livestock trails (some of the natural routes had pre-Roman origins), which appear to gain more prominence under the Visigoths and then were maintained into medieval times (Palet 2005).

Elsewhere, in the hinterland of *Barcino* (Barcelona), a process of deforestation is well attested in the wide plains of the city's territory and also in the nearby Montjuic mountain, as indicated by charcoal recovered in sediments and the evidence from these for an extension of grassland and pastures. There are also signs of the abandonment of the centuriation system along with the predominance of new divisions and routes for grazing and shepherding. However, although in general there was a decline in the vegetation – oak woodlands were considerably reduced, while shrubs were expanded, both as a consequence of wildfires – during the 6th and 7th centuries, some new crops appeared in the mountain areas, such as olive trees and hemp (Palet *et al.* 2012).

In the territory of *Salmatica* (Salamanca), a small Roman town in

the Northern Plateau, from Flavian times until the first decades of the 5th century, the territory underwent a systematic exploitation, organised around the *villae* system (Ariño Gil *et al.* 2012; Ariño Gil *et al.* 2015). During the Suevic-Visigothic domination of this area, there was a continuous activity at many of the *villae*, at least until the 6th century – and occasionally this perhaps might extend into the 8th century – serving as productive centres, but losing any classical aristocratic appearance; nonetheless, this same period sees new settlements emerge, namely villages and hamlets.

These cited cases, in different areas of the Peninsula and with differing landscapes, show no uniform 'response' to Visigothic as opposed to Roman rule; as seen, in some areas much of the ancient centuriation partitioning was maintained, while in others this kind of territorial organisation was abandoned, perhaps at differing rates. But what we do observe across the Iberian Peninsula is a growing number of villages and hamlets, sometimes in connection with ancient *villae* and sometimes not. This revised settlement structure arose both in areas with a high number of urban centres, such as the Ebro and Guadalquivir valleys, as well as in spaces with few urban centres, like the North-West. Indeed, in the *Gallaecia* province and surroundings, from the 4th to 6th century, farms and hamlets emerged, probably related to small-scale farming operations; this scattered pattern persisted into the Early Middle Ages and seemingly also features the creation of many agricultural terraces from the 6th century (Ballesteros-Arias and Blanco-Rotea 2009; Ballesteros-Arias 2010). In fact, we might note that in this same area, in the 7th century, the monk Valerius of Bierzo explained how he created an orchard on a steep mountain slope, by building terraces (*Repl.* 16).

An inherited peninsula and inherited landscapes

Even though it has been suggested that it is possible to see causative links between socio-economic crises (defined as profound change with important consequences, but without necessarily negative implications) and environmental changes (cf. van Geel and Berglund 2000; de Menocal 2001), our current evidence made it difficult to determine a clear link in the period explored in this volume. We cannot deny major historical and socio-political change – the fall of old powers, the arrival of new – and changes to display systems (including habitative and material cultural), but there is still debate about what factors (internal? external?) were crucial in the development of cultural change. Potentially, we could try to link the weaker economy of the Visigothic Kingdom to the attested drier

conditions in the Iberian Peninsula, but it is very difficult to prove such. At the same time, the palaeoenvironmental data support the view that the end of the so-called Roman Optimum and the start of a colder and drier period likely impacted on the size of domesticates and accelerated the general degradation of soils and vegetation – with large deforestation processes. If Roman control had not fallen away along with the *villa* system, then a crisis might have been delayed, but perhaps not for long. Nonetheless, what stands out for the Visigothic period is a reduced agricultural focus, and the increase in extensive breeding and grazing – components that became fundamental in the Visigothic economy.

The traditional crops were maintained: cereals, vines and olives (in that order) were the main cultivation foci then in the Iberian Peninsula. However, the introduction of rye, which is an undemanding cereal, one well adapted to low temperatures, is viewed as a clear symptom of the poorer character to the land's soils in these centuries. In addition, it appears that at/around many of the new villages and hamlets, fruit trees, vegetables and legumes were also cultivated, probably mainly oriented for a self-sufficiency economy. While there will have been markets in the urban centres and, presumably, in new central places, such as hilltop sites, we do not know how these operated and how far goods were traded; as we will see, many villages produced their own basic pottery and metalwork. Most households probably had a small orchard. What is interesting is the evidence for systems of artificial irrigation in southern and eastern regions, which enabled the cultivation of household and fruit crops in a fairly extensive way. From Isidore of Seville (*Etym.* XX, 15, 1–3), we hear of various procedures for channelling water and elevating this from wells and river courses – thus aspects of water management not introduced later by the Arabs – including the *routa/austra*, which may well have been a water-wheel (García Moreno 1979). The preoccupation about water in the drier areas of the Visigothic Kingdom seems evident from a law of King Recceswinth (649–672) (*LV.* VIII, 4, 31), which notes the scarce rainfall in some areas and the need to regulate watering, threatening people with fines for any illicit appropriation of watercourses.

The bulk of Roman agricultural techniques and practice and some remaining native ones endured significantly, and so there was no special effort to create technical improvements, apart from the implementation of a few additional crop types. The traditional dry-farming, related especially to cereals and legumes, included the fallow and crop rotation, mostly repeated the preceding period. In this crop

process, soil regeneration and fertilisation, via the spread of manure, was probably affected by the reduction of the size of domesticates and maybe also by a decrease of the number of livestock heads. As a result, controlled fires were very common in Visigothic times, helping landscape fertilisation via ash and for deforestation, to create more pastures and lands for cereal farming.

In summary, although there were many landscapes in the Peninsula, it is possible to think of the post-classical landscapes of *Hispania* as made up of various ecosystems, from the arid and colder inner Spain to the more comfortable temperatures of the coast, and from the dense forests and pastures of the northern areas to the yellow and brown plains of the southern regions; most of them were affected by forest clearances and by arable activity, and in most cases these maintained the outputs typical of the Roman imperial period, while giving more space to grazing of smaller (in size and number) livestock populations. Alongside or in tandem with this, a more diverse settlement pattern appeared than had prevailed under Rome with its elite estates and *villas*, one that had to respond also to the effects of climatic change. The forms, contents and evolutions of these landscapes, settlements, economies and peoples across the late antique and early medieval periods in the Peninsula are the focus of the following chapters, which aim to build a coherent image of a territory in transformation.

Chapter 2

The last decades of the Western Roman Empire and the processes of disengagement

A long journey: from *Hispania* to the *Diocesis Hispaniarum*

Rome's presence in the Iberia Peninsula started from 218 bc when, in the context of the Second Punic War, the focus of conflict shifted to this western part of the Mediterranean basin. The Roman conquest of *Hispania* in fact took more than two centuries and was interrupted, on several occasions, by Roman civil wars that in part developed in this territory, such as that of Sertorius and the major wars between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. The definitive pacification of the Peninsula came under Augustus, when the northern area, the territories of the *Cantabri*, *Astures* and *Gallaeci*, after many years of struggle, was finally incorporated under Rome by 19 bc.[1] In between the mid-2nd century and 19 bc we can observe military activity followed by the formation of urban colonies (towns such as *Graccurris* (Alfaro, La Rioja) founded in 179 bc and *Lepida* in 44 bc, later re-founded with the name of *Celsa* (Velilla de Ebro, Zaragoza), after 36 bc – see Beltrán Lloris *et al.* 1984, 11–28) to stimulate Romanisation of the natives and the lands; colonies were populated by former soldiers, *veterani*, these granted lands – these sometimes marked by extant traces of centuriation or land allotment (Ariño Gil *et al.* 2004, 43–65, 117–138) – and also populated by Italo-Roman peasants, who, due to the agrarian crisis in the Italian Peninsula, were forced to seek new lands. The evidence shows a heavy settlement of such colonists in the Guadalquivir and Ebro valleys in particular.

The acquisition of *Hispania* opened a new market and a new resource base for Rome, and it can be argued that *Hispania*'s elite

quickly participated in the new possibilities: we thus see the creation of many urban centres, the spread of the Latin language and the adoption of Roman habits and customs – to name just some of the factors at play (see Bendala Galán 2006). However, the cultural interaction between the native population groups and the new arrivals (both colonists and administrators, but also, as importantly, traders) was also very important, creating many convergence phenomena, but also some areas of continuity of pre-Roman traditions, including belief systems. Here we must observe the size and variety of the lands and peoples of the Peninsula: for example, in terms of urbanism, while in the Guadalquivir Valley the new urban model was fairly quickly established, we see a striking contrast with the north-west of the Peninsula, where the Roman urban reality was always less developed (cf. Bendala Galán *et al.* 1987; Almagro Gorbea 1990).

Nonetheless, a stable administrative structure was established, which, initially, ran from Augustus until Diocletian in the late 3rd century AD. Then was a territorial division into three provinces: the largest one, occupying the northern and western peninsular areas, starting from the south-east, the current region of Malaga and Almeria to the Duero Valley, including Galicia and all the Cantabria fringe, was called *Citerior*; the Guadalquivir Valley and the southern coast, from the current region of Huelva until Malaga, formed *Baetica*; and the area bellow the Duero Valley, including the Guadiana Valley, part of the Central Plateau and modern Portugal, comprised the province of *Lusitania*.

During the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, the Iberian Peninsula quickly emerged as an important economic component of the Roman Empire (Richardson 1996), a focus for export of oil, wine (Chic García 2012), fish sauce (*garum*) products (with facilities especially in/along the southern and eastern coasts) and metals, such as silver, lead and cinnabar, in the Guadalquivir Valley and in the *Carthago Nova* (Cartagena) area, and gold in the north-west, which was directly State-controlled and operated (Orejas Saco del Valle 2014). Although agrarian production was always fundamental, there were several fluctuations, such as an attested decline in wine production in the second half of the 1st century AD, at a time when oil exportation continued to grow, reaching the major market of Rome, but also sent in large quantities to more distant territories/provinces, such as *Germania* and *Britannia*. We should recall, of course, that emperors Trajan and Hadrian both hailed from *Hispania* and their reigns saw sizeable investment in the provinces and in Hispanic towns (for each reign, there are several collections of papers; particularly noteworthy

are the compilations edited by González and Saquete 2003; González and Pavón Torrejón 2009).

Hispania saw less disruption during the so-called Third Century Crisis than other Roman territories (cf. Arce 1998). In fact, for the Iberian Peninsula, periods in the century before had been more critical: namely, damage caused by the invasion of the *Mauri* from North Africa (occurring at two different moments: AD 171–172 and 177–178), affecting above all the *Baetica* region; and, more disturbing for the northern areas of the Peninsula, were the late 3rd-century civil war conflicts linked to the formation of the Severan dynasty. This is not the place to relate all the tensions provoked by the so-called 'Year of the five Emperors' (AD 193), but, as a brief summary of the events, after the critical year of 193, while Septimius Severus was emperor, Clodius Albinus was *caesar* in *Britannia*; however, in 196, Clodius Albinus, probably tired of his limited political role, elevated himself to *augustus* in *Britannia*, *Gallia* and probably also *Germania*. *Hispania Citerior* seems to have supported this rebellion (*Herodianus* 3, 7, 1) and, after the defeat of Albinus, it was severely punished by Septimius Severus, with the execution of senators, such as the provincial governor, and with sizeable land confiscations (Sanz Huesma 2007, 25–27).

Subsequent references to *Hispania* in the ancient sources are surprisingly scarce, implying that it became somewhat marginal politically and economically in the Empire. Yet archaeologically, as will be discussed in this book, the 3rd and 4th centuries are fairly prosperous and without notable disruption to economic outputs. The Peninsula's 'peripheral' position and its lack of a standing set of legions helped it avoid the military and political traumas in its central and northern territories that would damage and change the Empire substantially, with the rise of a new type of 'soldier-emperor'.

For the mid-3rd century some notices on *Hispania* exist, but we must recognise that these were reported a century later, in the second half of the 4th century, by authors like Aurelius Victor and Eutropius, both of whom were especially critical of the emperor Gallienus (260–268). We are told then of a Frankish incursion, with their forces crossing into the Peninsula and assailing the *Tarraconensis* region and especially its capital, *Tarraco*, which suffered badly until the Franks moved on, heading south to North Africa. The date of this invasion is not clear and ranges from AD 257–258 (Tarradell 1955; Blázquez 1968) to 259 (Sánchez Real 1951) and even 265–267 (Balil 1957). However, archaeologically, this invasion is minimally attested, and only in the port *suburbium* of *Tarraco* (Pociña and Remolá 2001, 92–

93) have some levels of destruction been found, while in other cities and the *villae* of this territory these are hard to trace. Thus, many modern authors prefer to see this 'invasion' far more as an isolated yet surprisingly successful raid, but not as a real invasion (Arce 2009, 27–28). There is also reference to a subsequent arrival in 276(?) by Alemanni, but this claim (Taracena 1952; but Palol (1959, 29–31) linked a destruction of the small town of *Clunia* – close to Coruña del Conde, Burgos – to this incursion) is generally wholly rejected.

Even though these calamities were likely not as terrible as once believed, we cannot disregard other episodes that seriously affected the Peninsula as well as the rest of the Empire, such as the major plague – probably measles and/or smallpox (McNeill 1984, 117–118) – between 252–253, or the persecutions against Christians, especially harsh, in the mid-century, during the reigns of Decius and Valerianus and later also under Diocletian. However, for each of these we have no specific figures to work with, nor any excavated plague burials.

Emperor Diocletian was the architect of deep political and administrative change in the later Roman Empire. First of all, he resigned from his sole rule to inaugurate the period called in modern historiography 'The Tetrarchy' (Mattingly 1939, 324–339). After a brief period of 'dyarchy' with Maximian, in which Diocletian oversaw the eastern regions of the Empire while Maximian took charge of the western regions, the rule of four was created: in 293, both emperors expanded the imperial 'college' by appointing two *Caesars* (one responsible to each *Augustus*) – Galerius and Constantius Chlorus (*S. H. A. Carinus*, 18, 3). Although opinions still differ about how and what distribution of territorial jurisdiction was followed (Seston 1946; Arce 2009, 29–31), it seems probable that *Hispania*, Italia and Africa reported to Maximian.

The Diocletianic reorganisation also included a military overhaul – he started the separation between civic and military power, which was definitively consolidated with Constantine the Great from the 310s – and substantial changes in the Empire's territorial design. This restructuring created smaller (more manageable) units based around the ancient provinces (the original 48 provinces were more than doubled to 104 provinces), which in turn were included in bigger circumscriptions, each called a *diocesis*. As a result, the Iberian Peninsula underwent an important and progressive modification (for an in-depth analysis, see Arce 2009, 43–69), with the formation of five provinces: *Baetica*, *Carthaginensis*, *Gallaecia*, *Tarraconensis*[2] and *Lusitania.* The capital and seat of the *vicarius Hispaniarum* was *Emerita* (Mérida). In addition, the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* included an extra-

peninsular province in the north-western part of North Africa, namely *Mauritania Tingitana*, and also the *Insulae Balearum* (probably made a province at a later stage, between AD 360–400).

This division had the clear goal of providing more effective and more rapid procedures in tax collection, justice and administration. For these activities, the *vicarius* had an *officium*, which could contain *c.* 300 members, who replicated in some fashion the functioning of the imperial bureaucracy. Between AD 316 and 340, the *Diocesis* had also a *comes Hispaniarum*; this count was not a permanent position and was appointed as a solution to urban *curiae* problems (i.e. ensuring enough town councillors active) and tax issues – a constant source of troubles –, as well as to push forward public (including infrastructural) works, notably in the capital of *Emerita* (Sanz Huesma 2007, 69–86).

From the fourth century to the final phases of Roman control

Following a (more credible) phase of enemy raids – a possible new Frankish and/or North African *Mauri* incursion, which was suppressed by Maximian in 297 – it can be stressed that the 4th century appears as a very prosperous and almost tranquil century in the *Diocesis Hispaniarum*. Although the death of Constantine (337) resulted in renewed tensions between his successors and in the emergence of usurpers, *Hispania* mainly lay outside 'central' political and military problems. Indeed, apart from a brief event (350) with the usurper Magnentius, against Constans (brother of Constance II and Constantine II, and son of Constantine the Great), who received the governorship of the Prefecture of Gaul, in which the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* was included, the Iberian Peninsula continued without great upheavals. Indeed, after Magnentius' defeat in AD 353, *Hispania* practically disappears from the political scene; contemporary sources, especially Ammianus Marcellinus, barely mention this territory, which probably indicates it was not disturbed by too many events. But this did not mean an always peaceful or lavish lifestyle here, and the limited monetary information that we have seems to show a *diocesis* used to a self-sufficient economy. Interestingly, there is no known mint in the Peninsula in the 4th century; this gap has been linked to the fact that the Peninsula had very few (permanent) troops.

The *Diocesis* featured large estates, with rich landowners (*possessores*) who produced agricultural commodities, but with, in theory, a reduced trade (Arce 2009, 145–155). This period witnessed the concentration of properties, sometimes scattered but usually

managed by a single *possessor*, and a notable embellishment of many of the larger *villae*,[3] endowed with rich decoration including mosaics and statuary. We might also recognise an increase in taxation, likely already started under Diocletian and confirmed under Constantine. The number of ordinary taxpayers who struggled to meet the tax obligations grew significantly in the 4th century, and, as a result, rural smallholders started to disappear or else came under the 'protection' of a rich *possessor*, who could better afford to meet the economic responsibilities to the State. We see in this process the origin of 'colonial system' on the land.

The municipal oligarchy, represented mainly by *curiales*, who had the responsibility of tax collection in the cities and their territories, undeniably faced problems in this task since not only were there many people who could not pay the onerous taxes, but also because the *honorati* – the higher-status members of these municipal senates or councils – and, later on, the main ecclesiastical/clerical positions, too, came to avoid these charges. These escalating economic problems were also evident in the constant abuses from the *curiae*.[4] Indeed, it was necessary to reinforce the role of the *defensor ciuitatis*, under Valentinian I (364–375), to avoid these misuses of power (San Huesma 2007, 82–83). However, although this position was originally independently selected, after AD 385 they were also nominated by the *curia* and, a couple of decades later, senators and bishops participated in this election process.

Theodosius (379–395) was the last emperor to rule over both the eastern and the western parts of the Roman Empire, and he effectively made Orthodox Nicene Christianity the official State Church of the Empire. His birthplace was *Cauca*, modern Coca, near Segovia, and his Hispanic roots link to an evident and strong increase in Iberian senators in the Empire's administration (Chastagnol 1965, 269–307; Matthews 1975, 167–172) – generating, according to some scholars, a close court circle of 'Hispanic aristocracy'. However, in reality we have too little information about this preponderance of Hispanic noblemen at the Constantinopolitan court. In fact, thanks to detailed prosopographical studies, it is possible to see that, even if it is valid to say that the numbers of Hispanic elite in the important offices grew by the end of the 4th century, they amounted only to *c.* 30%; and quite probably there were other, more important groups, such as the circle of Ausonius from Gaul and Symmachus from Rome (Bravo 1996).

Besides these political matters, the growth of the Church across all levels of Roman society is one of the crucial characteristics of this period. Coexisting with pagan cults, Christianity was established

gradually in *Hispania*, as in the rest of the Empire, only later gaining more strength. As will be seen in Chapter 6, the materiality of these early Christians is scarce and, although we hear of the increasing prominence of bishops in cities and to a lesser degree in rural contexts, it seems striking that there were just three Hispanic Church councils celebrated in the *Diocesis* during the 4th century: in *Iliberris* (close to the city of Granada) early in the century, *Caesaraugusta* (Zaragoza) in 380 and *Toletum* (Toledo) in 400.

Christianity played a decisive part in the social configuration, having a multifunctional role as a syncretistic creed with an increasingly close connection with the public authority. However, in the Iberian Peninsula, these first official phases were marked by constant ecclesiastical disputes, especially noteworthy being the Priscillianist controversy. The followers of Priscillian (a bishop of Ávila – AD 380–385) practised what has been labelled as a 'more creative' Christianity, in which there was a personal approach to God, a ritual and theological liberty and a special prominence for lay people and women – something which conflicted with the episcopal authority. Despite these conflicts, some of the Priscillianists themselves held episcopal office (thus surely reflecting popular or internal support within some sectors of the Hispanic Church). The tension and conflict largely ended in AD 385 with the trial of Priscillian in Trier and his condemnation to death for sorcery (Escribano Paño 2002; Fernández Ubiña 2007). Priscillianism, however, survived for at least two more centuries in the southern regions of *Gallia* and, above all, in the *Gallaecia* area (where Priscillian had been born), but also in the *Tarraconensis* – where a very important movement lasted at least into the first decades of the 5th century (Arce 2005, 152–155) – causing some ongoing religious disputes, just as Arianism did during the 4th century and at other times in *Hispania* (see Escribano Paño 2005, on possible links between Priscillianism and Arianism). As we will see below, Arianism saw some renewal and expansion in the next main phase in *Hispania*'s history, with the arrival and settlement of the so-called barbarian groups.

Civil war and the arrival of new *gentes* in the Peninsula

The last *vicarii Hispaniarum* in the 4th century were Petronius (395–397) and Macrobius (who was perhaps author of the *Saturnalia*, although this claim is not fully accepted), while for the 5th century we only know of one Vigilius, who was legally required to regulate the

dignitas of the *officium* of *vicarius* (*CTh.* 1, 15, 16; Arce 1999). Such office-holders show that the Empire and its administration still functioned here in the earliest 5th century, with central legitimate authority residing in the (new) capital of Italy, Ravenna, with the Emperor Honorius (393–423), youngest son of Theodosius. However, Honorius' reign suffered numerous usurpation attempts – thus, in 407 Constantine III was proclaimed emperor by troops based in *Britannia*, and one of his first actions was to cross to *Gallia* (aiming to restore an *Imperium Gallarium* formed by *Gallia*, *Hispania* and Italia). His movements were also connected to the fact that various groups of barbarians – including Suevi, Vandals and Alans – had entered onto Roman soil, crossing the frozen River Rhine in the winter of 406. It seems that most of *Hispania* (or at least its authorities) joined Constantine's revolution, although our sources reveal that a number of high aristocratic landowners resisted this in the name of Honorius and Rome. It has been argued that this resistance was probably led by members and friends of the Theodosian family in the Peninsula. We know the names of some of these, such as the two rich noblemen, Didymus and Verinianus (both relatives of Honorius), and two brothers, Theodosiolus and Lagodius. But these failed in their efforts and, as a consequence, 'central' rule was supplanted by a new administration and government (see Arce 2005, 31–47; Díaz Martínez 2007, 274–284). The usurper's army, composed in part of allied barbarian troops, was led by the generals Gerontius and Constans (son of Constantine III). Following the defeat of the supporters of Honorius, Constans returned to Arles (where his father established his capital), while Gerontius remained in *Hispania*, to subdue any further resistance. But Gerontius himself then seems to have rebelled against Constantine III, and the indications are that he allied himself with barbarian groups who then crossed from Gaul into the Iberian Peninsula.

Dated to 409, this 'barbarian entrance' is characterised by the 'bloody ferocity' of the pillage, as Hydatius,[5] the leading historian of these events, relates. It is perhaps difficult to interpret the apocalyptic view of the process that Hydatius presents; but, certainly, his text is powerful in giving a sense of the insecurity, shock and worries of the Hispano-Romans at the arrival and seeming outrages of the invaders, as well as of the abuses of the 'Roman' authority via the *tyrannus exactor* – 'tyrannical tax collectors' – and the soldiers,[6] who pillaged the cities for food and goods (*Hyd., Chron.* 40, 48; Díaz Martínez 2007, 276).

Gerontius increased his military forces with soldiers (perhaps

deserters) from the Gallic and British army forces of Constantine III, as well as barbarian soldiers; Constans, meanwhile, stayed in Arles. Gerontius decided to proclaim an *augustus* for the *Diocesis* and elected a certain Maximus. This Maximus is a shadowy figure, and the reasons that made Gerontius choose Maximus and not himself for the purple are much debated. Perhaps Maximus was always meant to be merely a puppet in Gerontius' hands, or else he was a local/Hispanic aristocrat and so was elected to satisfy the local Hispano-Roman population. Subsequent events are obscure, but we hear of Gerontius committing suicide/falling upon his sword and Maximus fleeing, probably to the barbarian forces, as the central Roman forces regained control. Maximus soon took the bold step of rebelling again in *Hispania*, but was captured in 420 and later beheaded in Ravenna (Arce 2009, 47–62, 97–100).

Quite how these barbarian *gentes* acted within the Empire in AD 409 is not very clear, whether mobile/roving or else creating temporary bases, and with what sort of internal organisation. Things stabilised in AD 411, however, when we are told of the division of territories among these – areas that did not include the provinces of *Tarraconensis* (where Gerontius and Maximus based themselves), *Insulae Balearis* and *Mauritania*. Yet how this settlement process was carried out is uncertain: for many scholars (*e.g.* Arce 2002, 79; 2005, 67–72), it was a kind of random lottery '… *sorte ad inhabitandum sibi provinciarum dividunt regiones*' (*Hyd., Chron.* 41); whereas for others it was a calculated division and allocation of spaces, based on the demographic strength and needs of the groups of Suevi, Vandals and Alans (*e.g.* Goffart 1986, 101–104; Díaz Martínez 2011a, 55–68). There should be some Roman 'strategy' at least at play here, perhaps with efforts to use the settled spaces as buffers, perhaps not using the best agricultural lands in the allocations, and not having too big a concentration in specific areas of specific *gentes*.

Such settlement did require a formal treaty or agreement with the Roman authority, identifying what rights they had or did not have within the old Roman provinces. From the end of the 4th century and until the official end of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476, *c.* 100 *foedus* or treaties (similar to the Hispanic one) were signed (Maier 1973, 126). However, both Hydatius and Orosius (VII, 40, 10) said that the division of territories was 'by lots', which might sound like a task within the *gentes* as opposed to direct participation by imperial Roman authorities (see Arce 2005, 67–68; Díaz Martínez 2007, 279–280). For some scholars, this was not an official *foedus* (Thompson 1976, 22–28), though others argue that there must have been some

clear and approved agreement with the usurpers Gerontius and Maximus as the local powers (García Moreno 1986, 82; Halsall 2007, 227–228). It has also been proposed that the agreement was reached through discussion with the most important Hispanic *possessores*, since some of their own lands were being passed over to new owners (Pérez-Prendes 1991, 45–49). However, even if the terminology used seems clearly related to a *foedus*, there was perhaps no official (i.e. from Honorius' court) acceptance of this, since the textual sources never cite the stipulated barbarian military service in return (Díaz Martínez 2011a, 60).

Such (important) issues aside, we can observe how, in this first allocation, the Alans were installed in the *Lusitania* and Cartaginense provinces, the Siling Vandals in *Baetica*, and the Hasdingi Vandals and the Suevi in *Gallaecia*. However, this initial division was rather short-lived because in 417 the Gothic *foederati* and their king Valia were sent by the official imperial court in Italy to recover imperial lands in *Hispania*, with some strong success in removing the majority of these groups (*Hyd., Chron.* 55). The exceptions were the *gentes* in *Gallaecia*, who may well have concluded a new imperial agreement, perhaps with the emperor seeing these as a counterpoint to the newly arrived Goths, keeping them 'in check' (Arce 2002, 79; Díaz Martínez 2011a, 63–65).

Warfare, insecurity and uncertainty will have been fairly constant in these years – no doubt a major worry to Honorius, who, together with Flavius Constantius (husband of his sister Galla Placidia and co-emperor since 421), decided to send Asterius as *comes Hispaniarum*. It was Asterius, along with the *vicarius Hispaniarum*, Maurocellus, who prevented the noted second usurpation of Maximus and who forced the Vandals to leave *Gallaecia* – but leaving the Suevi there – and move onto the *Baetica* region. The breakdown of the agreements happened in 419, and at some point in the next decade the Vandal leaders elected to cross instead to Africa (Courtois 1955; Arce 2002). By this date, AD 429, the Alans had also been removed, most likely at the start of Valia's campaigns. Meanwhile, there was a need to contain the Goths, especially after the main aim – the recovery of the Hispanic territory to the Empire – had been accomplished. Quite probably the Gothic military strength and ability concerned Constantius, and he negotiated due compensation for them, shifting them out of the Iberian Peninsula, into southern Gallia (*Hyd., Chron.* 61), with lands granted in Aquitaine, between Toulouse and the Ocean.

Of the groups that arrived in the Iberian Peninsula in 409, the Suevi endured best and, in fact, formed the oldest/first Germanic

kingdom (AD 411–585) in *Hispania*. In theory, they were the least numerous *gentes*, but we have substantial information about them thanks to Hydatius, who lived among them, and Isidore,[7] who wrote a *Historia Suevorum*, probably to justify the Visigothic king Leovigild's actions (see below). The Suevi mainly occupied the *Gallaecia* region – centred on cities like *Lucus* (Lugo), *Asturica* (Astorga) and *Bracara* (Braga), the latter made the kingdom's capital (Thompson 1982, 158–167) – but did try to extend their lands, or at least carried out raids/*razzias* in neighbouring regions, such as under King Rechiar, joining forces with the *bacaudae* (led by one *Basilio*), in *Ilerda* (Lérida) and in the *territorium* of *Caesaraugusta* (*Hyd., Chron*. 134). Rechiar, and before him his father, Rechila, brought the Suevic Kingdom to its maximum extent, including the *Baetica* and *Carthaginensis* regions. Their main bases in this early period were *Hispalis* (Seville) and *Emerita* – the latter was where Rechila established his court for a brief period and where he died in 448. Rechiario, who sought a more defined kingdom, married the daughter of the Gothic king Theodoric and converted to Catholicism (*Hyd., Chron.* 129) – interpreted as a way of becoming more open to the native Hispano-Roman population in now-Suevic lands. Noticeably, Rechiar's reign was characterised by a number of pacts both with the late Roman Empire and with the Visigoths – these regularly broken – until the Suevic invasion of *Tarraconensis*. In response to this expansion, in 456 the emperor Avitus sent forces under the Visigothic leader Theodoric II, who defeated the Suevi near Astorga at the so-called Battle of the Órbigo. Rechiario was captured and later executed, and many of the lands recovered, including *Emerita*, where a group of Visigoths established themselves (Díaz Martinez 2011a, 69–102).

From this point in time was inaugurated what P. C. Díaz (2011a, 84–102) has called the 'Suevic polyarchy', in which the Suevic Kingdom, under Visigothic tutelage, endured, yet functioned in an almost uninterrupted situation of civil war, with local leaders – they all called themselves kings, even if not always were they recognised by the whole Suevic population – struggling for power, variously in league or with pacts with the Visigoths of Theodoric II. This period of Suevic disruption is documented best via Hydatius, who regularly emphasised the 'Suevic perfidy', recording, for example, incursions into *Lusitania* and *Gallaecia* (*e.g. Hyd., Chron*. 181–191) to obtain booty and slaughtering local populations and aristocrats (who Hydatius rather vaguely labels as *romani* and *honestii nati*, while the bulk of the local population is referred to as *gallaeci*).

By 458, the whole *Baetica* region was recovered, including *Hispalis*,

whereas Suevic raids continued in *Lusitania*, even under the new Visigothic king, Euric, who had assassinated his own brother Theodoric. It is under King Euric that *Tarraconensis* was definitively annexed: between 470 and 475, the province's *maritimae civitates* were conquered, followed by *Pompaelo* (Pamplona) and *Caesaraugusta* in 476. Euric was able to obtain formal Roman imperial recognition – from the emperor Julius Nepos – of Visigothic control over *Hispania* (AD 475). However, in reality the ancient *Diocesis* had been out of western imperial control since 460, because North Africa and the Balearic islands, together with Corsica and Sardinia, had fallen under the control of the Vandals (based in Carthage since 439) (Courtois 1955, 200–202). The Suevic Kingdom, meanwhile, was relegated to the limits of the ancient *Gallecia* region until its disappearance in the last decades of the 6th century, as a consequence of the Visigothic King Leovigild's campaigns (Fig. 2).

However, before discussing this definitive supremacy of the Visigoths, it is necessary to evaluate one of the most discussed events related to the Visigoths and their presence in *Hispania*: namely, the presumed massive migration of Visigothic groups from areas north of the Pyrenees to the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the 5th century, due chiefly to pressure from the Franks, Burgundians and Alamanni in the northern parts of the *Gallia* territory.

The analysis of this migratory and settlement process is based principally on two passages of the *Consularia Caesaraugustana*[8] that state: *His consulibus Goti in Hispanias ingressisunt* (for AD 494; *CC*. 71a: 22) and, shortly afterwards, *His consulibus Gotthi intra Hispanias sedes acceperunt* (AD 497; *CC*. 75a: 23).[9] Traditional historiography (for an overview of these studies, see Koch 2006) has always maintained that Frankish pressure on the Kingdom of Toulouse (the *regnum Tolosanum*), long before the defeat of Battle of Vouillé in 507 and that kingdom's fall, was the primary cause in the movement of a sizeable and scattered group of Gothic *gentes*; it has been suggested that between 80,000 and 200,000 people (Ripoll 1989; see discussion below) will have been involved in this immigration of settlers into the Peninsula. This hypothesis is currently being called into question, firstly because, just after Vouillé, Theodoric, king of Ostrogothic Italy, had recovered part of the kingdom, at least the province of *Narbonensis*, substantially reducing the loss (Arce 2011, 23–25); and secondly because the cited passages of the *Consularia Caesaraugustana* are seen to refer to *military* entrances/arrivals and probably exclusively relate to the Tarraconensis province (Domínguez Monedero 1985; 1986; Koch 2006). Thus, some scholars prefer to see

no massive 'popular' migration to the Iberian Peninsula before the 6th century – and it probably occurred (perhaps in diverse stages) between the date at which the *Consularia Caesaraugustana* affirms that Theodoric reigned over the Goths in *Hispania*, that is, in AD 511, and the reign of the Ostrogothic King Theudis (531–548), when the Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea clearly refers to a movement of the defeated, with their women and children, from *Gallia* to *Hispania* (*BG*. V, 13, 12–13; the importance of this passage is highlighted by Arce 2011, 38–39). But other modern commentators still prefer to see some movement in the final years of the 5th century (Díaz Martínez 2007, 304–305).

Furthermore, there is discussion and debate regarding the mode of distribution of lands between Hispano-Romans and Visigoths, varying between a view of an orderly distribution following the late Roman military formula of *hospitalitas* (an allocation of two-thirds of arable lands, one-third of slaves and half of the forests and wastelands – based on various historical sources) and a peaceful incorporation (maybe a handing over/concession) of lands (mainly from ancient imperial properties and abandoned lands – the documented '*agri deserti*'). However, a number of leading scholars argue that it is difficult to think of a distribution process based on set *hospitalitas* rules, such as that carried out for Goths in Aquitaine in 418 (according to Liebeschuetz 2007, who sees a similar process), since that related to *Hispania* in the 6th century occurred when the Western Roman Empire had already disappeared (Díaz Martínez 2007, 347–349; Arce 2011, 43–44). Currently, therefore, it is difficult to have a clear consensus and precise view of this process of the allocation of lands to the Visigoths and also of the physical and spatial impact of all this on the Hispano-Romans and their properties.

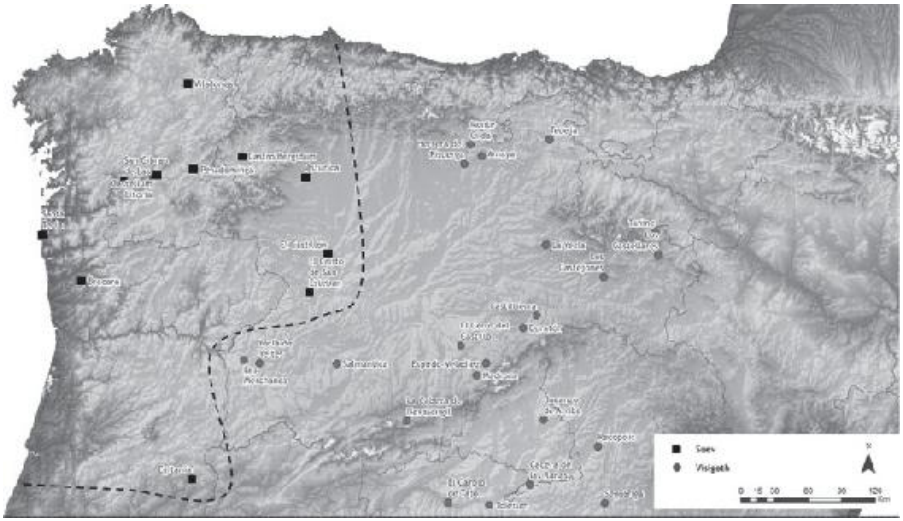

Figure 2. The approximate frontier line and zone between the Suevic and Visigothic territories in north-west Hispania. *Names listed refer to both urban sites and to the better-known hilltop settlements in the territory (image by P. Diarte-Blasco).*

Returning to royal affairs, the so-called 'Ostrogothic Interim'[10] (García Iglesias 1975, 89–120) was headed by King Theodoric, based on a (fictional) monarchic connection or lineage represented by his nephew Amalaric (son of King Alaric II and his first wife, Theodegotha, daughter of Theodoric), who was a minor child. Theoderic ruled from the Ostrogothic Kingdom of Italy's capital, Ravenna, and claimed suzerainty over both southern Gaul and the Hispanic territories, although those possessions were maintained as territories independent from the Italian domains. This latter was a crucial fact because, after Theodoric's death in 526, Amalaric was proclaimed king of Visigoths, establishing his authority outside of the Ostrogothic sphere of influence. Even though the Visigothic capital was retained in Narbonne for a while, it was soon after transferred to *Barcino* by Amalaric in 531 – the relocation of the capital could be considered as the definitive end of the kingdom in Gaul – transferring definitively the areas of operation to the Iberian Peninsula (Díaz Martínez 2007, 344).

It is striking, however, that Amalaric's successors, Theudis and Theudigisel (or Theudisclus), were both Ostrogoths by birth, but clearly sought to firm up the new Visigothic realm. The former Ostrogothic general, Theudis (531–548), moreover, is documented as marrying a rich Roman heiress from *Tarraconensis*, which shows a peaceful mode of incorporation of lands and a way of approaching approaching the Hispano-Roman populations (*Isid., Hist. Goth.* 41. 3,

praised this king's socio-political behaviour; Collins 1983, 36 notes that the marriage gave him sizeable slave numbers and he used these for a private army). Finally, from 549, Agila I, the first pure Visigothic-blood monarch since the time of Alaric II, was proclaimed king. However, in this period, it seems evident that the Visigoths felt more identified with local warriors/leaders than with a stable monarchy (Heather 1991, 320). We have to wait until King Leovigild (568–586) to see a formal renovation of rulership and state, with a centralisation of the territorial administration and a more coherent and articulated State organisation.

The Visigoths in *Hispania*: forging an identity

As seen, the Peninsula offers a strong example of the processes of the arrival and settlement of 'barbarians' in the late and post-Roman West, and their resultant interaction with the local populations in both town and country. But, unlike other groups of *gentes*, the long-lasting presence of the Visigoths, who came to occupy a majority of the Peninsula (apart from *Gallaecia*), ensured – at least in theory – a more consistent presence and visibility in the archaeological record (see Chapter 5). Traditional historiography has suggested that the number of Visigoths that settled in the Peninsula was in the order of *c.* 100,000, while the number of Alans, Suevi and Vandals was much lower, perhaps 20,000 (Jones 1964, 195–196; Thompson 1969, proposing a proportion to ten to one, when comparing with the peninsula's original population). However, some scholars elevate the Visigothic numbers to 130,000–150,000 (Ripoll López 1989), or even 200,000, proposing also that the Hispano-Roman population was in the order of *c.* 8–9 million (Sánchez Albornoz 1959), or even more (*c.* 12 million, according to García Gallo 1955). Any such numbers are problematic, however, and more recent studies tend to state that no firm figures can be reached of Visigoths who settled in the Peninsula, or else they reduce the numbers to 30,000 people at most, and those of the earlier groups of Vandals, Suevi and Alans are reduced to 10,000 (see Collins 2004, 24–25). In brief, this issue remains open and without easy solution, pending further data and discoveries; however, one can affirm that the appearance of many burials of new rite does reveal new peoples, who are also reflected in the laws which show the legal divisions at least between Goths and Romans, even if already from King Euric this jurisprudence shows minimal conflict between both 'ethnic' groups, whereas the socio-economic tensions were behind most disputes (Díaz Martínez 2007, 349). We must also recognise that the warfare noted above, combined with noted

outbreaks of plague, will have meant fluctuations, at least demographically. Similarly, the question of the division of lands is also unresolved and we are far from finding agreement.

The Visigothic Kingdom, however, did not form itself fully fledged and articulated; in truth, it is not until Leovigild that it is possible to consider the definitive configuration of this reign. Indeed, after King Agila I's proclamation (549), many dynastic problems arose, generating tension within the Gothic aristocracy; Athanagild successfully rebelled against him and took the throne (554–567). A most important feature of this rebellion is the fact that Athanagild requested assistance from the Byzantine emperor Justinian, who dispatched troops (in reality, they had not quitted the Peninsula after Agila's defeat); these troops do not really seem to have helped the usurper or king, but instead carved out an imperial enclave (Collins 1983, 38–39). This imperial or Byzantine presence in south-east Spain endured until the 7th century (540s–625), which unsurprisingly meant regular problems with the Visigoths (about the Byzantines in *Hispania*, see Vallejo Girvés 2012). Athanagild is also known for transferring the Visigothic capital to Toledo, a seat chosen probably because it had gained a significant and growing role, being strategically located between the *Lusitania*, *Baetica* and *Tarraconensis* provinces, but also because it lay in a protected position from outside threats, whether Byzantine, Franks and Suevi.

Following Athanagild's death, Liuva became king of *Hispania* and *Septimania* at *Narbo* (Narbonne). Probably due to internal and external pressures affecting his fragmented possessions, in the second year of his reign (AD 568), Liuva made his brother Leovigild both co-ruler and heir, putting him in direct charge of *Hispania Citerior*. When Liuva died in 572, Leovigild ruled as sole monarch and acted decisively in seeking to forge a unified state territorial structure and restoring Visigothic authority lost since the time of Euric (Isidore calls him a renovator of the monarchy: *Hist. Goth.* 51; see Collins 1983, 41–58). Leovigild (572–586) is indeed considered the 'maker' of the kingdom, countering Frankish pressures, recovering rebel Hispanic cities – both *urbes et castella*, according to John of Biclar[11] – as well as some Byzantine-held areas (but not all of the south-east), and consolidating the frontier with the imperial forces. The political conception of the Kingdom of Toledo was being formulated, based above all on a reinforced monarchy, located firmly at the top of the social pyramid, with subordinate and dependent nobility, these based in part on military prestige and wealth. Toledo now became the definitive *ciuitas regia* and notable new works were carried out here. And, as a further

powerful display of rulership (see Díaz Martínez 1999, 336), Leovigild founded a magnificent city (578) in the Celtiberia, giving it the name of *Reccopolis* to honour his son Reccared.[12]

Recalling the image of ancient Roman imperial power, specifically of Emperor Justinian, this urban foundation – together with the minting of gold coins commemorating his victories – could be considered part of a wider discourse, in which the union between kingdom, law and faith was core. The role of the king as a legislator becomes evident in this period, since Leovigild had a strong interest in creating his own laws – for example, he permitted marriage between *Gothi* and *Romani* (although distinctions between both groups persisted) – adding to the *Breuarium* of Alaric and the Euric Codex. Unfortunately, we remain ignorant of the majority of Leovigild's laws because his *Codex Revisus* has not survived, although some of the texts are collected as *antiquae* in the *Lex Visigothorum*, a compilation mainly of the mid-7th century, under King Recceswinth (see Díaz Martínez 1999, 337; 2007, 365). Probably one of Leovigild's main 'political' errors was his vision of an Arian kingdom, which set him apart from the Hispano-Roman population. In any case, the Hispanic Catholics, who enjoyed a stable territorial organisation, had no desire to convert to Arianism – something that his son Reccared understood.

Leovigild's wish to create a stable dynasty was evident in his associating his two sons, Hermenegild and Reccared, to the throne. The elder son, Hermenegild, who was married to the Frankish Catholic princess Ingundis, the sister of the Frankish Austrasian king Childebert II, was assigned *Baetica* and the southern *Lusitania* region to govern on Leovigild's behalf. However, surprisingly, he rebelled against his father, drawing on the allegiance of cities such as *Corduba*, *Hispalis* and *Emerita*, but seeking also support from Suevi and Byzantines, and probably Franks. Even if some ancient authors, such as Gregory of Tours, elevated this three-year-long civil war to one with a religious cause – in other words, a struggle between the Arians of Leovigild and the Catholics of Hermenigild – it was likely mainly down to the personal dissatisfaction of Hermenegild in being 'relegated' (in his eyes) to the Peninsula's southern areas, far from Toledo, and to the apparent preference shown to Reccared (who, after all, even had a new city named after him!) (Díaz Martínez 2007, 366–369). Eventually the conflict ended with Hermenegild's surrender, his exile and his later assassination (probably organised by his father and his brother) in Tarragona in AD 585.

Leovigild also achieved an important victory over the Suevic Kingdom, which was completely defeated and saw its territory

annexed. Some time before, perhaps in *c*. 550, the Suevi – according to the testimony of Martin of Braga – were converted to Catholicism. Indeed, from the suburban monastery of Dumio, Martin seems to have had an extraordinary influence over the Suevic monarchy, giving the kingdom an internal cohesion and significance not been seen before (Díaz Martínez 2011a, 219–230). This flourish, between the 560s and 580s, may well have prompted Gothic mistrust and jealousy, preferring, of course, a weaker neighbour. Suevic independence from Visigoths, their recent contact with Byzantines and probably also with Franks, and their support to the usurper Hermenegild, combined to prompt an aggressive Visigothic intervention in their territory, which definitively ended the Suevic Kingdom in AD 585. So, by the end of the 6th century, although the Byzantines retained the narrow strip of the province of *Spania*,[13] the hegemony of the Visigoths in the Iberian Peninsula was evident.

Even if Leovigild could be considered as having crafted the kingdom, it was under Reccared (586–601) when the union of the original substrate population and the Goths was definitively established under the same creed – Catholicism[14] (Thompson 1960, 4–35). This was decisive in the consolidation of the monarchic institution, in the legitimising of the Gothic domain of *Hispania* and, above all, in a definitive fusion of both the Hispano-Romans and the Visigoths; it also marked a heightened role of the Church in the Visigothic State (Díaz Martínez 1999, 337). In 589, in the III Council of Toledo (under Reccared's supervision), this whole process was officially confirmed, with the main religious heads there being Leandro, bishop of Seville, John of Biclar and Eutropius, abbot of the Servitan monastery (Vives 1963, 139–144). From this time onwards, the Councils became the ideal venue at which the king met with the aristocrats and the clergy, creating space for discussion, but also where the king's place at the apex of the social organisation was reaffirmed. The kingdom, indeed, featured a mixture of secular and ecclesiastic administration, without clear separation between both spheres.

Reccared died in 601 in *Toletum* and was succeeded by his son Liuva, albeit only for a very short while, since in 603 the aristocrat Witteric (603–610) decided to terminate 35 years of dynastic rule, ushering in a new era. The factional fighting in Witteric's reign was a constant, until his assassination, which was in fact the last recorded violent death for a Visigothic king. After the brief reign of Gundemar, in which the struggle with Vascones and Franks continued, Sisebut (612–621) appeared as a different type of monarch, being someone

with many learned and cultural interests, such as in religious texts; he himself composed many letters as well as poetic and hagiographic works (Fontaine 1980; Heather 1996, 291–293). However, he was also able to subdue the *Astures* and to conquer – with the support of the *dux* Swinthila (himself soon to become king, between 621–631) – some of the Byzantines' main cities (*Isid., Hist. Goth.* 61–62), notably Malaga, and their territories, reducing imperial holds to the Balearic Islands and the (current) Murcia region (Fig. 3). Unlike his predecessors, surprisingly, King Sisebut pursued a very hard-line anti-Jew policy, which included enforced conversions, but with what success rate is not known.

The definitive expulsion of the Byzantines came between 625 and 626 under King Swinthila, who took advantage of the fact that the Eastern Roman Empire, then under Emperor Heraclius, was being attacked on many fronts, mainly by Pannonian Avars and Sassanians (Collins 1983, 112). However, the Byzantines retained – at least for a while – holds in the Balearic Islands and across the Strait, in Ceuta in North Africa.

Like most of his predecessors, Swinthila also sought to involve his son in the throne, but this privilege was not recognised by many of the Visigothic aristocrats, leading to tensions with the different elite factions. As seen, violent successions and resultant political instability were a regular problem in the Visigothic Kingdom, and this effort to secure succession was a logical idea (one partly drawing on late Roman models), but clearly one often prone to backfire. The hereditary principle never completely succeeded in this kingdom and, probably because of this, in 633, the IV Council of Toledo (*can.* 75; Vives 1963, 217–218), presided over by Isidore, established that the nobility of the nation together with the bishops would, in common, designate the successor to the throne. Three years later, at the V Council of Toledo (*can.* 3), it was also stated that it would be a requisite that any holder of the throne must belong to the *Gothicae gentis nobilitas* – perhaps a sign that some of the highest Hispano-Roman nobility occasionally aspired to the throne (see Díaz Martínez 1999, 339).

The ambitions and threat of various aristocratic groups were, as said, a permanent issue; sometimes these were in league with clerics, as evident in the reigns of Swinthila, Chindaswinth (642–653), and the later Wamba (672–680) (García Moreno 1975, 152–184). The attempts of the Councils to control the situation were almost always in vain (only Wamba was elected, according to *can.* 75 of the IV Council of Toledo). Increasingly, Church councils became the key political

body in the organisation and functioning of the Visigothic State (Díaz Martínez 1999, 338–339), which was actually a 'theocratic monarchy' (King 1972, 23). The Church, indeed, justified and supported a number of usurpations, such as in the case of Sisenand (631–636), who, after defeating Swinthila, was ratified by the IV Council of Toledo. It is interesting to see how the clerical interest changed, depending on the time and circumstances. Thus, Isidore in his *Historia* emphasised many of the virtues (*e.g.* generosity, fidelity and prudence) of Swinthila, but some years later he himself presided over the Council, at which Swinthila was condemned as a criminal (arguing that he had enriched himself at the expense of the poor people) and which saw Sisenand confirmed instead as king (Arce 2011, 51–53).[15]

Isidore's *Historia* stops from *c*. AD 625, and from that moment our information about the kingdom becomes much less consistent, because we lack any later chronicle or annal. In any case, we know that the political tensions endured. One of the more enduring reigns was that of Chindaswinth (642–653), who – inevitably himself a usurper – persecuted/removed all of those aristocrats who had conspired against the preceding monarchs, ensuring a relatively peaceful reign for himself and his son, Recceswinth, whom he associated with the throne (649–672) as joint ruler before he became sole king. Both sought to reform the monarchy, but in different ways: while Chindaswinth tried to secularise the government, separating his legislative initiatives from Church ones, Recceswinth hoped to cultivate better relations with the Church and the nobility, who had been strongly repressed by his father some years before. The latter, as mentioned above, compiled a fundamental collection of laws, known under the name of *Lex Visigothorum* or *Liber Iudiciourum*, comprising 12 books and 526 chapters, within which traditions of Roman law remain evident. The 'modern' character of this compilation has been recognised in its design as a universal law for the kingdom and in its overcoming of ethnic distinctions, making possible, for example, marriage between Romans and Goths.

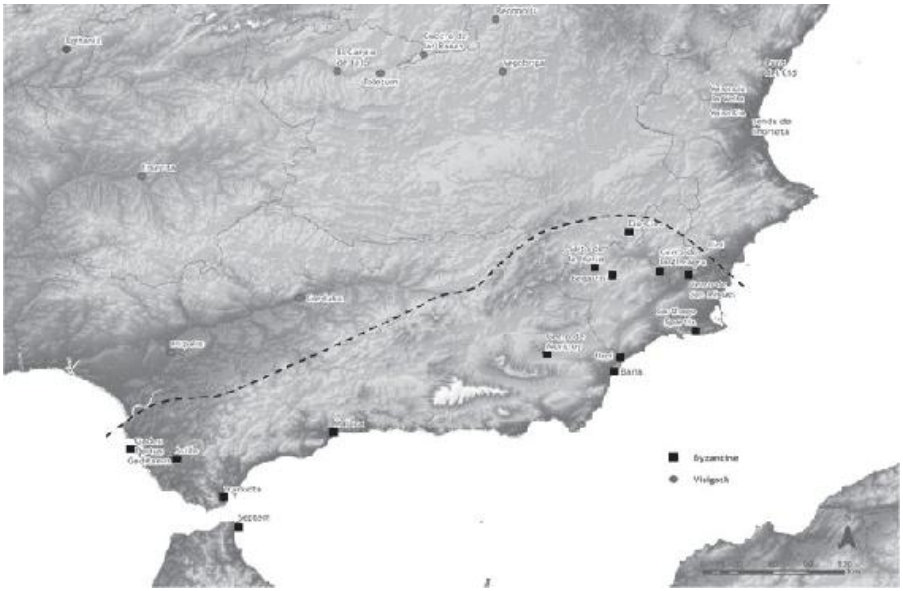

Figure 3. The approximate frontier line and zone between the Byzantine and Visigothic territories in south-east Hispania. *Names listed refer to both urban sites and to the better-known hilltop settlements in the territory (image by P. Diarte-Blasco).*

The demise of Visigothic *Hispania*

The death of Recceswinth at the beginning of September AD 672 has been viewed as the starting point of the demise of the kingdom, with increasing instability, complex and variable relationships with the aristocrats and the Church, and territorial factioning. As noted before, the next monarch, Wamba (672–680), was elected by the IV Council of Toledo, but he straight away faced serious problems in maintaining the fabric of the kingdom, notably due to the uprising of *Cantabri* and Vascones[16] and the so-called 'Rebellion of Paulus', in which *dux* Paulus, originally sent to the Septimania to quell a revolt (organised by Hilderic, governor of Nimes), chose himself to rebel, inducing his troops to renounce their loyalty to Wamba and elect him as king. In both cases, the (actual) king won and a major victory celebration was held in *Toletum*, which featured the humiliation of the defeated foes and the *imitatio* of the ancient Roman triumph (Julian of Toledo, *HW*, 29–30; cf. Arce 2011, 116–118).

Despite such success, Wamba was forced into retirement and ended his days in a monastery. Erwig was then proclaimed king (680–687), but he was virtually a puppet of the Church and of the nobility. He did maintain and renew the military laws that Wamba had instituted, yet here he struggled, as seen when the aristocracy and other powerful men were called upon to send their servants and peasants to combat

on the various fronts pressing the kingdom, but delayed responding or even ignored the call. This mobilisation issue was a growing problem during the 7th century, especially in its later decades, and shows how the nobility and larger landowners did not feel attached to the monarchy's interests, hence the threats of fines and punishments to generate an adequate mobilisation of men. Many of the nobles' forces were actually something similar to private armies – formed mainly by peasants and slaves – used for State actions (Arce 2011, 127–128; Díaz Martínez 2011b, 31–32).

The evident growth of this incipient feudalisation (Barbero and Vigil 1978), indeed, was behind the final moments of the Visigothic monarchy. As seen in previous reigns, so also with Egica (687–702) first and Wittiza (694–710) later (associated with the throne by his father Egica), the weak monarchy needed continuous legal 'help' to function. The situation was getting worse, and it was necessary to prohibit any kind of interpersonal oath of fidelity, considering these bonds as a sign of disloyalty to the king (*LV.* II, 5, 19). The punishments, not only those related with this 'infidelity', became increasingly cruel/vicious and included very onerous penalties.

Unfortunately, our information about these last phases of the kingdom is poor, because after 694 we lack further acts of the Councils (we do know that, during Wittiza's reign, a Church Council was held in Toledo, but its acts are not preserved); the so-called Chronicle of 754 or *Mozarabic Chronicle*, composed towards the end of the 8th century, when Spain was already under the Arab rule, is probably one of the best sources for this period.

After the death of Wittiza, one part of the nobility seemingly upheld the election of Roderic, who was probably then *dux* of *Baetica*. Yet it seems that this choice was not supported by all the aristocracy and another faction sought to back Wittiza's relatives. In this scenario of renewed upheaval and confusion, the entrance of Arab and Berber forces – with a contingent likely of no more than 8,000 men – in the early 8th century might be viewed as relatively unexpected, above all considering their expansionist desires after having subjugated most of North Africa (Manzano Moreno 2006, 29–34). While some modern authors think that the sons of Wittiza requested Arab help against Roderic, it seems probable that sometime before, even from the reigns of kings Erwig and Egica, Berber groups had already made occasional raids and incursions on the Peninsula. What is attested is the defeat of Roderic by troops under the Arab commander Tāriq ibn Ziyād in the so-called Battle of Guadalete (AD 711, maybe 712), close to the Bay of Gibraltar. The military action formed the rapid *coup de grâce* for the

Visigothic Kingdom, since military opposition subsequent to this seems minimal (Collins 1983, 142–145, 151–153; Manzano Moreno 2006, 42–53). The incapacitation of the State by the end of the 7th century and the start of the 8th, despite the numerous reforms and attempts of centralising authority – the Church's achievements, indeed, are traceable some centuries later – meant a much weakened, incoherent State, incapable of concerted resistance, even to what might have been quite small numbers of Arab-Berber forces. Some nominal Visigothic resistance is attested: a successor named Achila II held onto the north-eastern areas (parts of the ancient *Tarraconenesis* and *Narbonensis* regions), but probably this was merely a brief mirage, due to be swept away once sufficient new Arab militia were brought in. By 714 all of the Iberian Peninsula was under Arab control and the failed Visigothic Kingdom was mainly rubble.

Notes

1 On the native Peninsular population previous to Roman conquest, see Almagro-Gorbea and Ruíz Zapatero 1992; and especially for the northern area, Santos Yanguas 1992.

2 The *Tarraconensis* was the one most affected by this new organisation, because its original territory was divided into three provinces – *Tarraconensis*, *Carthaginensis* and *Gallaecia*.

3 On this peak in the *villae*, see Chapter 4.

4 Towards the mid-4th century, due to economic pressures to provide cities with all necessary goods and due to the many unpopular obligations that the curial role had, new methods of evading the required duties appeared. Thus the role of *curialis* became a hereditary position, one requiring a personal wealth equivalent at least to a 25 *iugera* to ensure the maintenance of this municipal charge (AD 342; *C. Th.* 12. 1. 33).

5 Hydatius, bishop of *Aquae Flaviae*, in *Gallaecia* (modern Chaves in Portugal), wrote the *Chronica*, which is our key historical source for events in the Iberian Peninsula in the 5th century, or at least until 468 – the date of his presumed death (Burgess 1993, 6).

6 Unfortunately, it is difficult determine who these soldiers were. In theory, there was no permanent Roman army in the Peninsula (Arce 2005, 43) and perhaps it refers to '*burgarii*', urban garrisons to defend the provinces, or else the troops gathered around Gerontius and his allies (Le Roux 1982).

7 Isidore, archbishop of Seville (599–636), was a very prolific author. On him and his *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, see below.

8 In this book, I follow the edition of Cardelle de Hartmann (2001). Although not fully certain, current investigations accept that the (lost) source on which the *Consularia* is based belongs to the second half of the 6th century (Koch 2006).

9 These passages have been translated thus by Collins (2004, 33): 'In this consulship the Goths entered Spain' and 'In this consulship the Goths acquired settlements in Spain'.

10 On the division between Visigoths and Ostrogoths as differentiated tribal

confederations, see Heather 1991, 84–120. Heather also noted the Ostrogothic domination of Spain and remarked that calling this period an 'interval' diminishes the importance of 'Theodoric's involvement in *Hispania*' (Heather 1999, 477).

11 John of Biclar (*c.* 540–after 621) is fundamental to any study of this period and, indeed, he was much used by Isidore in his *History of the Goths*. John had Visigothic origins and was born in Lusitania, but was mainly educated in Constantinople. On his return to the Iberian Peninsula during the reign of Leovigild, he was exiled to Barcelona (probably because he was Catholic and Leovigild favoured Arianism). He founded a monastery in an undetermined place called Biclar, probably near Tarragona, but eventually was consecrated bishop of Gerona (Collins 1983, 42–43).

12 On this city and its archaeology, see Chapter 3.

13 The end of the problems between Leovigild and Hermenegild and the withdrawal of Byzantine support to him, probably saw the restoration of the *status quo* between King Leovigild and Emperor Maurice without any substantial changes in the Byzantine domains in the Iberian Peninsula (Vallejo Girvés 2012, 263–269).

14 Arianism may well have been maintained as sign of identity until the conversion under Reccared (Heather 1986, 289–318).

15 This reign has been linked to the introduction of the royal unction as a Visigothic characteristic, then imitated by other reigns, see Barbero 1970; King 1972, 48–49.

16 Based on the *Historia Wambae* of Julian of Toledo (translation of Díaz and Díaz 1990), bishop of the city between *c*. 680 and 690, it is hard to view this peripheral territory as ever effectively integrated in the kingdom. In theory, the Astures, Cantabri and Vascones of these northern lands were part of the Visigothic State, yet their populations were seemingly constantly reluctant to work with this. Indeed, the agreements made after their defeat, such as regarding the payment of taxes, seem to speak of powers in opposition rather than as internal ones (Díaz Martínez, 2007, 585–586).

Part II

Landscapes without strategy?

Chapter 3

Building the urban picture in late antique *Hispania*

Introduction

When the new *gentes* entered the Iberian Peninsula in the early years of the 5th century, *Hispania* was still primarily a solid aggregate of towns and cities. Yet it would be true to say that by then some of these centres were already embarking on a serious decay that, in some cases, resulted in their disappearance. Generally, however, Hispanic towns endured without vast upheavals, although they were something very different to what they had been during the Antonines, as Peter Brown recognised (1978). These modifications in the urban structure were related to a series of transformations which signify a new physiognomy based on a diverse conception of space and a modified relationship with the classical public infrastructures (Diarte-Blasco and Gurt i Esparraguera 2015). Apart from reductions in the urban perimeter, the general neglect of the sanitation system and the emergence of deserted spaces *intramuros*, it is probably the abandonment, spoliation and reutilisation – not necessarily always in that order – of the ancient public buildings that form the most characteristic phenomenon of late antique urbanism here and elsewhere in the Empire.

This process, as will be seen, had begun in some cases in the late 2nd century AD, was consolidated in the 3rd, and extended at least until the 5th or 6th century in most cities, and can be considered largely complete when we see the installation of the first urban churches. We can say 'complete' because, certainly, the installation of such churches and their cemeteries finally ended the formalised planning and even the spirit of the classical city, while confirming the existence of a new or altered urban reality. The chronology of this process is really important to understand, since we need to recognise

if the new populations (Visigoths, Suevi, etc.) had any direct impact on the urban decline and redesign. Although, drawing on the *Chronica* of Hydatius, we might be tempted to link the military movements of Suevi, Vandals, Alans and, to a lesser degree, Goths, with the decay and even loss of some cities, archaeological and historical analyses demonstrate that these warrior populations lacked the ability to capture cities. As E. A. Thompson (1982) and J. Arce (2005) have shown in their many studies, these barbarians may have sacked the *territoria* of a number of cities, such as *Caesaraugusta* (AD 449), *Lucus* (460) and *Asturica* (468), but they usually took possession the cities without real resistance. Apart from the case of *Conimbriga* (a Roman city located close to the small town of Condeixa-a-Nova, in Portugal), where part of the urban wall circuit was demolished, we do not in fact know of cases of destruction, meaning that the new powers wanted to maintain these sites as economic and political centres.

The continuity between the late Roman world and the Visigothic, Suevic and Byzantine territories[1] seems apparent when we talk about cities and towns. As we will see, some urban sites failed in this period, before the arrival of Muslims, but the majority persisted. In the current state of knowledge it is impossible to show any clear difference between the evolution of urban centres of one territory and another.

From Diocletian's reforms at the end of the 3rd century until the 5th century, we can observe a general continuity of the civil and territorial administration in *Hispania*. Cities continued to be administered by *curiae* or municipal senates. These were formed in *Hispania* by a variable number of *curiales*, according to the importance and the necessities of the respective cities. The overall vitality of the *municipia* by the late 4th century is known thanks to a series of constitutions received by *Petronius, vicarius Hispaniarum*, between 395 and 397, and collected in the Theodosian Law (*CTh.* 12. 1. 151), one of which is specifically dedicated to the *gesta municipalia*, linked with purchasing fixed properties and having to record documents in the protocols of the competent authority, aided by a scribe and three members of the *curia*.

During the unstable 5th century – when there were several usurpations, as well as the agreed arrival and settlement of Suevi, Vandals and Alans – no full interruption in imperial civil administration occurred, at least in the two first decades. In the case of the usurpation of Constantine III (407–409), all continued in the same way, although the people in charge were changed. By the mid-century, our information on the civil administrative authorities is

reduced to a minimum, and it appears that these civil offices had disappeared, with only military officials reported. Fortunately, *Hydatius* in his *Chronica* informs us that, at least until the end of the 5th century, administrative structures did not change greatly, nor did the citizen forms, because he still talks of *municipia* and *conventus*, giving thereby a clear sign of some level of imperial control and civic continuity (Arce 1999, 81).

The presence of Vandals and Alans was more ephemeral – and in consequence they have left only scarce archaeological traces – than the longer-lasting and stable presence of Visigoths, Suevi and Byzantines, until the final domination of Visigoths by the end of the 6th century. As already noted, for many decades of this century, the Peninsula was shared between Visigoths, the Suevic Kingdom (411–585) and also the Byzantines, who maintained a presence in south-east Spain for over 80 years (540s–625). This period coincided with a number of transformations in the urban institutions in the peninsula (Olmo-Enciso 1998); thanks to Cassiodorus (*Variae,* V, 39, 2), we know that from the early 6th century the *curiales* had lost their governmental capacity and their fiscal activity – although they did not disappear immediately, since they are documented (*LV*. V, 4, 19) at least until the mid-7th century and the reign of Chindaswinth (642–653). We might expect a similar situation for the Suevic Kingdom and the Byzantine *Provincia Spaniae*; in fact, wider information confirms that, by the mid-6th century, the *curiales* had lost their importance in urban government, although they continued in name in Italy and in the wider Byzantine Empire until the 7th century (Whittow 1990).

Municipal management in this period lay in the hands of an urban elite, comprising members of the nobility and officials with financial and legal responsibilities, and the Church, both of which took control of the government and the fiscal activities. In the second half of the 6th century, under King Leovigild (568–586), the highest representative documented is the *comes ciuitatis*, the leading magistrate for a city and its territory, who, together with the bishop, directed municipal administrative affairs.[2] In the Suevic Kingdom, the relevance of the Catholic Church in the territorial hierarchy is also evident in the *Parrochiale Suevum* – the so-called 'Suevic Parish List' (Díaz Martínez 1998a) – in which the identification between the civil administration and the ecclesiastical organisation was fundamental to the new structuring. However, it is important to bear in mind that this region featured a low number of *civitates* in the Roman period compared to other parts of the Iberian Peninsula, and this situation endured under Suevic control – until the end of the 6th century – and

under subsequent Visigothic domination.[3]

In fact, in all three territories, the role of the Church in building programmes was crucial in the creation of the revised townscapes, in which old pagan constructions no longer had a role, while churches, cathedrals, episcopal palaces, monasteries and other Christian buildings 'colonised' the ancient urban fabric. However, this was a long-term process, with its roots in the 3rd century, when the 'classic' profile of Roman cities began to dissolve in the face of changed social necessities. How this happened, their phases and turning points are analysed in this chapter.

The inception of the urban transformations

The characteristics of the process that discarded the ingredients of classical Roman urban design – orthogonal plan, splendid public edifices, street porticoes and so on – were not homogenous and synchronic across all the Hispanic cities, although some common features are evident: firstly, the loss of the reticulate plan and street structure; secondly, the desertion of some intramural areas; and, thirdly, the break-up and failing of public spaces and edifices, followed by either neglect and quarrying or else a repurposing. It is this transformation of spaces and buildings, intermittent, slow or rapid, which formulated a revised urban appearance. Notable is the 'invasion' of key public buildings by houses or industrial workshops dedicated to metal-working, ceramic production and even quarrying.

Starting from the second half of the 2nd century AD, but above all in the 3rd century, in many cities, such as *Caesaraugusta*, *Valentia* (Valencia), *Segobriga* (near to Saelices, Cuenca) and *Complutum* (Alcalá de Henares) – to name only the best known examples – we see how *fora*, the old Roman politico-economic heart of towns, overall persisted, while transformations began around them: many porches and porticoes were walled up, partitions were erected and some zones became dumps for waste (Diarte-Blasco 2015). Yet it is important to recognise that the sequence is not uniform. Thus, in the case of *Caesaraugusta*, its *forum* kept its ground plan largely intact throughout the 4th century, although the sewer that ran under the *forum* became blocked up at the end of the previous century (Mostalac and Perez 1989, 106–111). However, despite some evident improvements to the ornamentation of this *forum* between the end of the 3rd century and the earlier 4th century, from the second half of the 3rd century changes had commenced in this public space, including some blocking of walls and crude repairs to the pavement.

While the physiognomy of these *fora* came to be completely different to that of some decades before, in most cases they did still function as central squares, with religious, political, juridical and economical activities, until the end of the 4th or into the 5th century (a recent analysis in Diarte-Blasco 2018). This is especially evident in the provincial capitals of *Emerita*, *Tarraco* and *Corduba* (Córdoba), where honorary statues and dedicatory pedestals continued to be erected, to indicate that the *monumentum* and emblematic value of the *forum* could retain a vigorous activity during this period. In *Tarraco*, the Provincial *Forum* complex maintained its original and official function at least until the mid-5th century, as demonstrated by epigraphic evidence: the last inscription documented is dedicated to the emperors Leo and Anthemius (468–472). Although the epigraphic record alone cannot, of course, prove that the *forum* preserved all its original functions, it nonetheless seems clear that its representative character endured and that a civic administration still existed which wanted to decorate the space (TED'A 1989; Macías Solé 2013). Prior to this, however, from the second quarter of the 5th century, the first modifications had taken place, with a robbing of the Flavian era structures and the formation of large landfills – probably caused by plundering – that in some areas were set directly over the square. But the presence of open rubbish dumps within the *temenos* does not necessarily mean that the entire Provincial *Forum* had lost its official capacity, even though we should certainly assume some reduction of space and use.

Not every public building devolved in a similar way. In *Hispania,* as in many other parts of the Western Empire, the structural transformation of the *fora* started before its functional transformations came. However, in other monumental complexes the process was the opposite: structural transformations were directly proportional to the decline or loss of the original activity. Here we can highlight chiefly the entertainment buildings, so essential to the classical city, which all lost their role in Late Antiquity. Apart from fires or natural events, such as earthquakes, in many cases the process of decay began gradually and was probably influenced by changing preferences of spectators and patrons, especially in light of the rise of Christianity. Theatres appear to be the first building types affected: both in small towns and major cities like *Carthago Nova* (Ramallo Asensio *et al.* 1993), we find that from the second half of the 2nd century, and especially at its end, these structures failed.

A valuable guide is *Tarraco*, where, shortly after the last repairs or restoration in the final decades of the 2nd century, the theatre

complex began its downward spiral, well documented because the sewer that drained the eastern *parascenium* became choked up with waste soil and ceramics, such as *terra sigillata* africana, *terra sigillata hispanica*, common African pottery, lamps, amphorae and so on, all datable to the end of that century. The nymphaeum adjoining the theatre falls out of use at the same time, with its pool filled with materials identical to those of the theatre sewer. Yet there is rapid change in the use of the nymphaeum and, in general, of the whole monumental sector annexed to the theatre already in the 3rd century, when one of the foundations of the nymphaeum structure was dismantled and reused at the angle of a domestic structure, which was directly built over the levels of fill in the pool. In fact, a number of houses were erected in the former monumental sector adjoining the theatre, and many of these clearly exploited ashlar stonework, including various types of reused architecture pieces, such as decorative elements which had been taken or quarried from the theatre. This use and reuse of space and materials continued during 4th and 5th centuries. Moreover, among fragments of statuary and architecture, there was a hoard of 31 bronze coins, dated to AD 360, found within the drainage channel of the *orchestra*. The hoard and related ceramics signify a quarrying of the theatre fully into the 5th century, when it ceases. A robbing of metals from the site can also be documented, shown by remains of lead-smelting pits, signifying *in situ* recycling (Mar *et al.* 1993).

Indeed, in the 3rd century the majority of theatres were no longer active, with only a few continuing into the 4th century, among these the theatre at *Emerita*, the capital of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* (Durán 1998; 2004, 116–118). These changes appear delayed in the case of amphitheatres because, with some exceptions, as at Cartagena, all survived the 3rd century, only seeing decay at the end of this century or in the 4th, followed by a reoccupation and a spoliation of building materials. A recently explored example is at *Corduba*, although the date of its definitive abandonment remains uncertain (ceramic evidence suggests a process starting from *c.* AD 325, but lasting into the 420s). The data overall reveal that the process of loss here is not homogeneous, since, while some of the complex was looted down to the foundations, in other parts we see the insertion of domestic structures; next to the internal *ambulacrum*, for example, a room was built with plastered walls and a staircase built with elements dismantled from the *ambulacrum* vault and marble pieces likely also from the amphitheatre (Murillo *et al.* 2009).

The public preference for racing events, meanwhile, seems to be

reflected in the maintenance of a number of circuses in *Hispania* across the 4th century (Diarte-Blasco 2014). In some cases, such as *Tarraco,* the circus was still in use even in the 5th century (Macías Solé 1999, 241–242), but, by the middle of that century, most of its vaults had been cannibalised for housing. However, in smaller towns circuses lost their role earlier, as signified by robbing activity perhaps already in the late 3rd century at *Calagurris* (Calahorra, La Rioja), maybe denoting diminished local patronage here (Espinosa Ruiz 2006a, 50).

Archaeology is now demonstrating that urban thermal baths could also show durability. In fact, there are documented several restorations to public *thermae* in the 4th century, which perhaps indicate a significant dynamism in these urban centres, an ability to maintain and supply (water, wood, oils, slaves) these baths, and an appeal of this aspect of Roman culture. Such restorations occurred at the bath complexes of Sant Miquel in *Barcino* (Miró and Puig 2000); those of the *Tarraco* port identified with the *Thermae Montanae* for which an inscription identifies restorations by a *praeses* (Macías Solé 2004); and the example of *Olisipo* (Lisboa), where, between 336 and 338, an epigraph – now lost – recalled the provincial governor, *Numerius Albanus*, who restored these baths (Vieira da Silva 1944; D'Encarnação 2009).

We can recognise a sharp difference between the stability of public structures in capitals and larger cities compared to lesser towns, such as *Ercavica and Valeria* (both abandoned Roman towns and today located in the Cuenca region), and *Termes* and *Uxama* (likewise abandoned, but located in the closer Soria region), where the lifespans of these buildings were always shorter. This situation is likely related directly to the presence of stronger *curiae* in cities – these retaining a significant role in the urban administration – but also with a stronger socio-economic role in the territory, which ensured a continuity in the relationship between the urban centres and the Roman central government. In any case, when the Visigothic Kingdom was definitively established, none of these ancient complexes remained active.

The 'privatisation' phase

The afterlives of the ancient public buildings and roads vary, but coincide in the general tendency to see the old fabrics reused by private structures. This process was the basis for the end – or at least the partial dismembering – of the orthogonal plan and the creation of a new urban reality, in which private owners sought space from the decaying public buildings and even from the streets and porticoes that

bordered their houses. This ultimately led to more functional-looking, less-ordered townscapes.

In cities like *Caesaraugusta* and *Emerita* it is possible to trace, within their historic cores, the Roman road structure fossilised into the 21st-century plans. However, this cannot be extrapolated to obtain the complete plans of these ancient Roman cities, since the noted de-structuring of the reticular urban network, marked by 'invasive' housing, a narrowing of roadways and even the blocking of some streets, has 'blurred' various elements of the classical plans.[4] Although the changes were a long-term process that might often originate even before the 3rd century, it was in this late antique period when change became more generally pronounced. In *Bracara*, for example, in the residential district of Carvalheiras, we can document a domestic construction that occupies an *insula* and is surrounded by four porticoed streets; but, by the end of the 3rd/early 4th century, the porticoes were being exploited as perimeter walls to the houses (Lemos 2003). In some cities, this colonisation of space reached the road itself, as at *Barcino*, where the *domus* of Bisbe Caçador and Sant Miquel 'invaded' ground as far as the middle of the *Kardo minor* (García Biosca *et al.* 2003). We can often see how a road was rendered useless by appropriation by private owners and by the installation of landfill areas or dumps, as identified in *Carthago Nova* (Egea *et al.* 2011); this rubbish dumping can be also linked to productive areas, such as the agro-industrial complex for wine production set into the *Kardo maximus* of *Iesso* (Guisona, Lérida), by the end of the 5th century (Pera and Uscatescu 2007).

The appearance of domestic spaces and productive areas could happen also within former public buildings, after their closure/loss of their original function. It was probably the multifunctional character of the *forum* – its varied religious, political, juridical, economic and commercial activities – which ensured a longer continuity before the first houses started to intrude at these complexes, as seen in *Tarraco*, but also in other capitals, such as *Emerita* and *Corduba*. In *Corduba*'s colonial *forum*, such dwellings begin from the second half of the 4th century, even though honorific inscriptions were still being added to the *forum* (Hidalgo 2005). One can observe this 'coexistence' as much more evident and longer-lasting in the capitals than in lesser towns. However, even in small towns, the typical functionality of these public spaces could be maintained while the first houses appear; thus, at *Carteia* (located near to San Roque, Cádiz), the *forum* persisted into the 5th century, sharing space with 'high level' domestic units that had been established in the area (Roldán Gómez *et al.* 2006). Likewise,

in *Barcino*, we know that during the 4th century the *forum* continued, as documented by an inscription dedicated to Numius Emilianus Dexter, proconsul of Asia between AD 379 and 385. However, this continuity did not prevent the *ex-novo* construction of a house in the 4th century, the so-called '*domus* of Sant Honorat', occupying a compact area opposite the *forum* temple. The *domus*, featuring a private *balneum*, remained in use into the 6th century. However, limited excavation makes it difficult to say much more; nonetheless, one might argue that, despite the intrusions, part of the old *forum* square was retained as a public space until the medieval period (Riu i Barberá 1993; Florensa i Puchol and Gamarra Campuzano 2006).

These are two examples of what we can view as high-status housing intruding on former *fora*. But these were exceptions, since we normally find a general picture of modest houses inserted between the portico columns, with walls of poor quality, or else, simply, small domestic units set up in the square, without apparent planning. This is the case of most urban centres, such as *Carmo* (Carmona, Seville; see Anglada Curado *et al.* 2003) and *Turobriga* (a small town, close to Aroche, Huelva) – where, from the second half of the 3rd century AD, housing activity led to the compartmentalisation of the intercolumniation around the square (Campos Carrasco 2009). In centres of intermediate size, such as *Segobriga*, the process was similar: across the 4th century, the Augustan basilica suffered a plundering of its architectural materials (including the slabs of its pavement), while one of its lateral naves was partitioned up for houses. In the 5th century, and after the collapse of the western side of the basilica, the old public square came to be occupied with modest houses and craft spaces (Noguera Celdrán *et al.* 2008). Comparable sequences can be claimed for cities like *Corduba*, *Caesaraugusta* and *Barcino*. What needs further discussion, however, is who exactly settled in these former public spaces, and was this with the permission of the local council?[5] Was this a piecemeal or an ordered process? Is it a sign of overcrowding elsewhere in the old cities?

In terms of entertainment buildings, baths and markets, the domestic reuse of these structures only comes when the original use of the buildings has fallen away. This seems the case documented for almost all of the theatres, in small and mediumsize towns like *Acinipo* (close to Ronda, Málaga), *Regina* (located a few kilometres from Casas de Reina, Badajoz), *Italica* (Santiponce, Seville) and *Baelo Claudia* (located on the coast of Bolonia, Cádiz), as well as in the larger sites of *Caesaraugusta*, *Emerita* and *Tarraco*. In fact, in *Segobriga* (Almagro Basch 1973; Sánchez Lafuente 1995; Abascal Palazón *et al.* 2006)

there is a 'colonisation' in domestic use after the abandonment of the theatre and amphitheatre, between the 3rd and 4th centuries. But, in general, the circus complexes lack this domestic reuse, probably because of their shape and location away from the urban core; in most cases, circuses saw no notable functional reuse and instead their main fate was as quarries for materials. For example, at *Calagurris* the masonry lining of the circus was removed to help in the construction of the city walls in the second half of the 3rd century (Pavia *et al.* 2002), while in *Toletum* the looting of the circus led to the development of the area known today as the Vega Baja, as well as to the probable construction of the basilica of St Leocadia (Gurt i Esparraguera and Diarte-Blasco 2012).

Nevertheless, there were exceptions: the circuses of *Tarraco* and *Valentia* did see domestic 'colonisation', perhaps because both of these complexes occupied a prominent intramural space. In the case of *Valentia*, the circus' eastern perimeter wall – of 350 m length and width 5 m – was reused as a defensive wall. In fact, in the 11th century, the Islamic city wall was attached to these. We can overall argue for a continued use of the circuses here, and it is only at the end of the 5th century or the first decades of the 6th that the first strata relating to abandonment occur. But excavations show that subsequently, in the second half of the 6th century, a small community – it is still unclear if of commercial or military character – established itself in the *arena*, as documented via silos, hearths and walls, which reused architectural materials from the circus and, perhaps, also some ornamental elements from a nearby necropolis. Their walls were installed on a levelled *arena*, reusing ashlars, mixed with small stones, both carved and rough, bonded with mortar. Some walls reused the original Roman fabric for defining their spaces: for example, part of the wide wall of the western grandstand was emptied of its massive internal filling and the resulting space – with a width of 4 m – was divided up by low/narrow walls. This arena habitat seemingly endured until the 7th century (Ribera i Lacomba and Roselló Mesquida 2013).

Frequently, the creation of these houses and workshops coincided with the first phases of spoliation of the old buildings, in terms of the removal of stone, brick and architectural elements such columns. In *Gerunda* (Gerona), for example, restorations carried out in the *forum* complex came at the same time as the robbing of ashlars to help construct the town wall (Nolla Brufau *et al.* 2009). The establishment of workplaces related to productive and extractive activities can be

found in the *fora* of *Conimbriga*, *Caesaraugusta* and *Valentia*, but also in other types of buildings, such as theatres, as at *Caesaraugusta* and *Emerita*, and in amphitheatres. In *Corduba*, domestic units appeared by the first decades of the 4th century in the amphitheatre and can likely be related to the workers who were robbing out the materials of this complex (Murillo *et al.* 2010).

Other industrial activities documented in this 'second life' of the ancient public buildings relate to specific economic activities, such as the production of *garum* and maybe of purple at the theatre of *Malaca* (modern Málaga, see Corrales Aguilar 2007a) and the provincial *forum* of *Emerita*, in which, from the 5th century, was installed a metallurgical workshop (Ayerbe 2005). Most notable is the case of the theatre of *Carthago Nova*, whose original role was lost in the second half of the 2nd century, at a very critical moment for the city (Fig. 4); much later, in the 5th century, a 'public' building with a strong commercial use can be attested here. What happened between these dates is unclear because, unfortunately, the intermediate levels were completely removed when the new building was constructed over the *pulpitum*, which was levelled with the platform *scaenae frons*. Many constructive materials – bases, columns, capitals, cornices and even a fragment of an altar of Minerva – were reused in the walls of the 15 *tabernae* located in the area of the old *proscaenium*, while grey limestone slabs were set as the pavement. However, this commercial installation did not remain active long, since, by the end of the 5th century, it went out of use; later, in the Byzantine period, the space was occupied by housing (Ramallo Asensio *et al.* 2013).

The construction of a new townscape: defensive walls and churches *Defensive walls*

During the 4th and 5th centuries, therefore, many of the transformations in Hispania's towns and cities seem to be related to a largely civilian settlement/occupation of the old public structures, sometimes alongside, to a lesser extent, a reworking or adaptation of these; in other cases, there are some civic efforts to maintain some/a part of these public complexes. But we should observe no new public monument the cultural works of the first imperial centuries. Yet new and different types of works do appear that mark a changing design and focus of our towns, namely defensive walls and churches.

City walls are often seen as the most characteristic construction of the late Roman period. As defensive structures, these constructions have long been seen to denote wide-scale insecurity and built to

counter the threat of barbarian raids, starting with the documented Frankish incursion into *Hispania* in the 3rd century (Richmond 1931). Their construction in *Hispania* developed over a long period of time, from the second half of the 3th century until the 6th, but in some cases, as evident at *Caesaraugusta*, *Barcino* and *Emerita*, these late Roman and late antique defences overlay or incorporated earlier Roman colony walls.

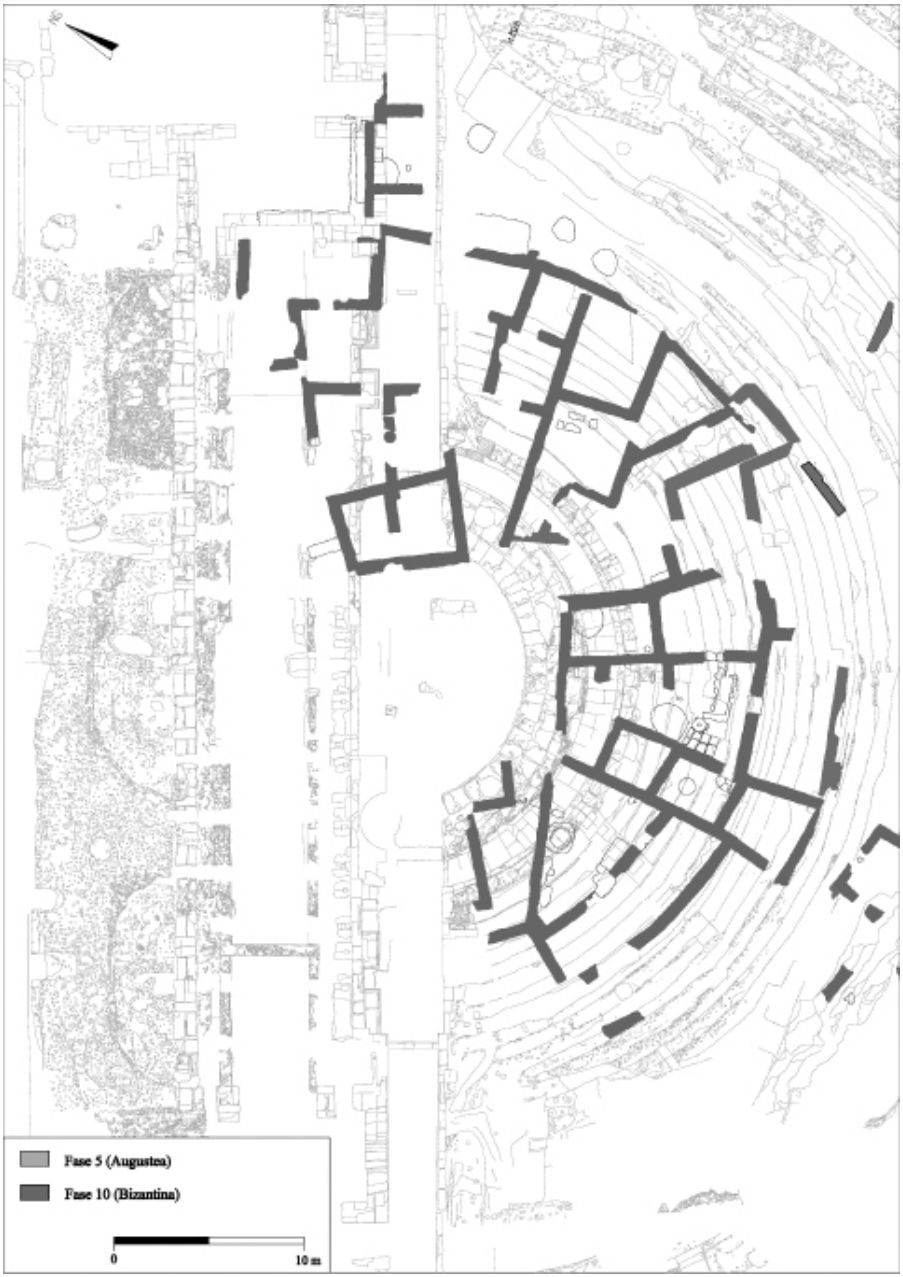

Figure 4. Carthago Nova *(at that time called* Carthago Spartia*): view of the excavated Byzantine houses built over the ancient theatre (image courtesy of S. Ramallo Asensio, E. Ruiz Valderas, A. J. Murcia Muñoz and M. Guillermo Martínez).*

It is also important to recognise that, in general, it is difficult to give an exact date to the construction of city walls, because in many cases they have been remodelled and restored at different moments in their history and not always across their whole circuit – thus, at

Corduba, the wall's southern section was reconstructed sometime between the 3rd and 6th century, whereas its northern section remained intact/unaltered into the Middle Ages (Molina Mahedero 2005). Another issue to bear in mind is that the wall chronology cannot usually be secured by the stratigraphy, which is always complex and reworked, with much residuality of materials; similarly, much of the current chronology of city walls is based on rather crude comparisons of form, technique and materials, as for *Emporiae* (San Martín de Ampurias, Gerona), whose walls are dated to the end of the 4th or 5th century, because the building technique is similar to the walls at *Gerunda* (Aquilué and Nolla Brufau 1999, 99–100).

There are virtually no references or notices in our sources regarding the erection of urban walls, yet it is a common scholarly view that the wider traumas of the Empire were the prompts for towns, previously without defences, to be provisioned with these from the second half of the 3rd century, as for *Malaca*, *Termes*, *Lucus*, *Bracara* and *Gigia* (Gijón), to name only the better- known examples (Diarte-Blasco 2012, 290–295; cf. Christie 2006, for Italy). Yet there is no regular or secure pattern, since erection of city walls might come in other cases with the 4th century, as for example for *Conimbriga*, or be delayed until the 5th century, as at *Myrtilis* (now the modern town of Mértola, Portugal), in this case probably in direct relation to the renewal of that city in that century (Macías 2006, 194–199).

The economic endeavour and the need for sizeable resources to undertake defensive wall construction certainly reveal the presence of a local power with the capacity to summon up the relevant human and material logistics, and with the authority to remove large quantities of *spolia* from the old urban public buildings. In *Caesaraugusta*, construction elements from the theatre were reused in the city walls (Escudero *et al.* 2007; Fig. 5); likewise in *Barcino*, probably in the 4th century, the city walls were built with systematic dismantling and exploitation of both funerary monuments and *suburbium* spaces and monuments, including baths (Puig and Rodà 2007; Miró and Puig 2000). In fact, in this regard we should observe how city wall construction impacted physically on suburban as well as (intra)urban spaces, clearing away or forcing a relocation of burial areas, as well as domestic and industrial units.

Indeed, in the case of *Conimbriga*, where the old circuit was ignored we see the full obliteration of older, both public and private, structures on the trajectory of the new perimeter of walls, built in the early part of the 4th century; we can see the dismantling of three thermal complexes – *Do Aqueducto*, *Da Muralha* and *Do Sul* – plus the

reuse of part of the amphitheatre (De Man 2007; 2009). This site is also an example of the phenomenon of contraction that some urban centres saw in this period: *Conimbra*'s urban space shrank by half, reduced to just *c*. 9 ha. Other examples of reduced defended spaces include *Myrtilis* and perhaps *Carthago Spartia* (Ramallo Asensio *et al.* 2010, 236).

Figure 5. Caesaraugusta*: city walls (image by P. Diarte-Blasco).*

An interesting case is seen at *Pollentia* (near modern Alcudia, on the island of Mallorca), in Byzantine-held territory, where excavation has revealed that, in the 3rd century, a destructive fire damaged several parts of the city, including the *forum*, which may have remained largely unrestored. Around the start of the 5th century a new town wall, almost 4.5 m wide, was built that reused the northern wall of the *forum*'s Capitoline temple, and ran along the west portico until the *insula* of shops (Orfila *et al.* 1999). This wall work has been related to the programme of Byzantine fortress building under Emperor Justinian in the 530s (Orfila 2000, 155); indeed, in the *Codex Justinianus* (I, 27, 2), we find a recommendation for the reduction of the fortified perimeter in order to ensure defences needed as few a number of soldiers as possible.

This process of reducing the wall perimeter has been used to emphasise a perceived urban decay, as a consequence of a shrinkage of population and economic capability, forgetting the fact that in most

cities we see at this same time an intensive growth of the *suburbium*. In *Hispania*, however, instances of reduced circuits are not commonplace, because, as said, in many cases the new walls were attached to the ancient ones, if sometimes with sight modifications in the course, as at *Emerita*, whose walls were rebuilt in the last decades of the 5th century. Here we can draw on the evidence of an inscription (Vives 1939; 1969, 126–127), now lost, which recalled the restoration of the wall and of the bridge over the River Guadiana at the request of the Gothic *dux* Salla and the bishop Zeno, in AD 483 (Alba Calzado 2005a). Other examples of sites (re)fortified in the Visigothic period are *Pax Iulia* (Beja, Portugal) and *Scallabis* (Santarém, Portugal), both capitals of *conventus* (De Man 2014).

Episcopal complexes and churches

By the end of the 5th century, but chiefly across the 6th and 7th centuries, we start to see with more clarity how urban building activities were overseen by the local powers and the bishops, generating a topographical Christianisation, which left the classical town behind. Although the construction of defences and the reorganisation of the *suburbia* were notable elements in the transformations of the cities, Christian buildings were the only innovative element of the post-classical urban plan. However, the first church buildings were certainly not as monumental as those we see in medieval contexts, and this causes many, quite serious, problems for archaeologists searching especially for the earliest episcopal sees, these frequently 'lost' under medieval rebuilds in the larger urban sites and capitals. One example is *Emerita*, the site of whose episcopal complex is not well documented. However, detailed information in the *Liber Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*,[6] a hagiographical work written in the 630s, combined with finds of decorative sculpture, has helped to pinpoint the location of the original see under the current Cathedral of Santa Maria (Mateos Cruz 1995a; Alba Calzado 2014b). Fortunately, better data are available on other Christian centres of worship in the city, such as the basilica of St Eulalia built outside the walls in the second half of the 5th century, but requiring clearance of funerary structures and graves previously located there (Mateos Cruz 1992; 1999).

Indeed, the *suburbia* often reveal the first stages of this process of Christianisation, with pre-existing necropoleis maintained and utilised for Christian burials from the 4th and 5th centuries, sometimes with chapels added near where, potentially, early martyrs had been buried. A century later, these old burial spaces were abandoned as new, fully

Christian cemeteries appeared around cult structures; in places, this meant a shift from one former burial ground to another to gather near martyrial basilicas, as recognised at *Corduba* (Murillo *et al.* 2010) and, more strikingly, within the amphitheatre of *Tarraco*.

Within the walled city spaces, information on the earliest Christian presences can be scarce, especially in smaller cities and towns, with evidence limited to the appearance of burials and fragments of decorative materials from likely churches. Such 'urban burials' are often found in seemingly isolated or scattered fashion, in ones or twos, or rare family groups, and might intrude into former public spaces, potentially linked to the new 'privatised' process. However, there are instances of large groups of urban burials, as found over the ancient *fora* of *Pollentia*, *Ercavica*, *Carteia* and *Astigi* (Écija, Seville), and here one should expect the presence (sometimes yet to be traced) of a nearby church. In *Pollentia*, for example, it seems that the area of the Capitolium temple was specifically or deliberately excluded from burial activity, suggesting that this old pagan building might have been converted into a church (Riera 2009). Similar are cases of temple conversion at *Conimbriga* and *Carteia* (De Man 2005; Roldan 1992), since burials were located at the foot of the podium of those buildings.

Known episcopal complexes are, as a result, fairly few, although we have several cases that can give an idea of the diversity of the Christian 'settlement' in cities, with, for example, cathedrals set over some ancient public buildings or encroaching on former private spaces, such as the well-studied example of *Barcino*. Even though the space of four *insulae* close to the city walls was occupied with a large *domus* and also a productive area with a *cetaria* and wine industry space, between the end of the 5th and 6th century the *episcopium* arose and was built with numerous materials from public spaces, as at least 14 inscriptions, as well as columns of the *forum*, were used in the construction of the (possible cruciform) church (Bonnet and Beltrán de Heredia 2000; 2001). Equally valuable is the archaeological evidence for the bishop's palace and that of the *comes ciuitatis,* headquarters of the civil power under the Visigoths. This building, together with the possible comital palace located in the former *forum* of *Gerunda* (Nolla Brufau *et al.* 2009, 128), is a very rare example of the local civil power's architecture.

Strikingly, in *Tarraco*, the episcopal complex arose over the ancient *Concilium Provinciae*. As noted above, from the 5th century this area underwent several transformations, notably with the insertion of domestic spaces and commercial and industrial workshops. However, around a century later, these spaces were Christianised through the

imposition of the new religious complex, which used for its construction the Flavian-period wall of the temple *temenos* (Aquilué 1993; Macías Solé 2013). In the 6th century – when additional Christian buildings appeared in the city – after a likely period of abandonment, a basilica was erected in the amphitheatre, in the spot where bishop Fructuosus and his deacons Augurius and Eulogius were martyred in AD 259 (TED'A 1990).

The location of a martyrdom is similarly claimed for the site chosen for the cathedral and the episcopal complex of *Valentia*, in *c.* AD 500 (Ribera i Lacomba and Roselló Mesquida 1999; Ribera i Lacomba 2005a; Fig. 6), namely over the presumed prison cell or *carcer* of St Vincent, in the south-eastern sector of the ancient *forum*; Vincent's martyrdom is documented in 304. It is noteworthy that some burials are attested close to this sacred space already in the second half of the 5th century, thus well prior to the construction of the great *episcopium* in the 6th century. We should imagine that this space became a prestigious site for burial in the late antique city.

Not just the Church as a builder? A State building programme in Toletum

As we have seen, most of the urban building programmes of this period are related to the episcopal power, which seems to be the key element of change in the townscapes. However, thanks to the archaeological work at the capital of the kingdom, *Toletum*, it has been possible to study a specific area, the so-called Vega Baja, sited just outside the city walls, which shows intensive building activity between the mid-6th and the mid-7th centuries (a detailed collection of papers on this area is in García *et al.* 2010).

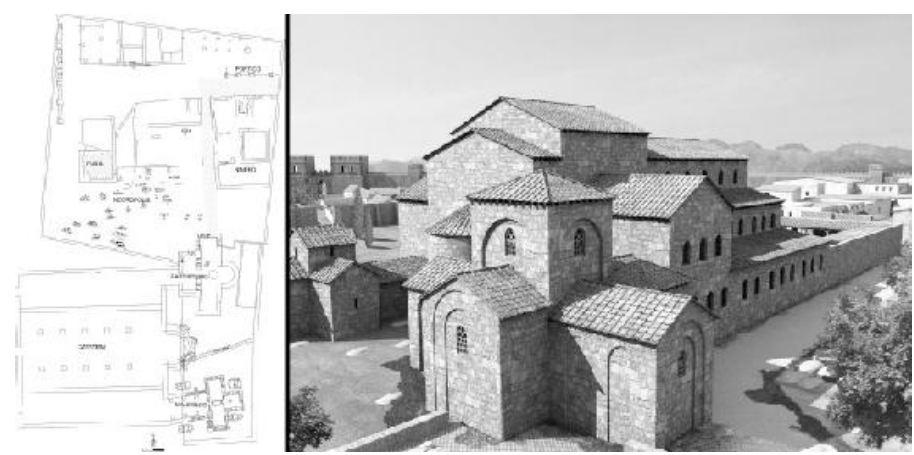

Figure 6. Valentia*: the episcopal complex. Plan and 3D reconstruction (image courtesy of Ayuntamiento de Valencia).*

The Vega Baja shows a hierarchical urban organisation, featuring a palatine complex, a set of houses and what seems to be a commercial zone, with shops and workshops, occupying a wide space of *c*. 85 ha (partially excavated – *c.* 20 ha). Previously, during the Roman period this area has been characterised by the presence of the noted circus and some suburban *villae* and burial zones. The whole was drastically transformed during the Visigothic period (Olmo-Enciso 2010, 88), involving an organised plan that implies the construction of a new road system and the erection of blocks of buildings, which were organised around a central courtyard – some with dimensions of 400 m2 (interestingly, in one of these houses was found a coin hoard of 30 tremisses of Leovigild, Sisebut, Swinthila, Sisenand and Chintila).

The so-called palatine complex (Olmo-Enciso 2010, 92–98) was formed of a palace and the church of the Holy Apostles, as the literary sources explained (including the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* (XII, 31), though without this specifying where this palace was located). In fact, in the VI Council of Toledo (AD 638), the palace is also associated with the cited basilica of St Leocadia – '*in praetorio Toletano in ecclessiam sanctae Leocadiae martyris* …'; while in the XII (AD 681), XV (688) and XVI Council of Toledo (693) the reference is to '*in suburbio Toletano ecclesia pretoriensi sanctorum Petri et Pauli*' (with small variations). In this period, *praeturium* and palace were interchangeable terms (Brühl 1977, 421–422). Archaeologically, however, the identification is still complicated: while the church dedicated to the Holy Apostles probably lies under the current church of San Pedro el Verde, suggested by mortared stone walls 1.25 m wide (with granite blocks in the corners), our information about the palace is more scarce. Some structures, close to the likely church, formed by ashlars bounded with calcareous mortar and 1.10 m wide, and *opus signinum* pavements, and a large-scale structure (located *c.* 100 m from the other, to the south-east), dated to the second half of the 6th century, seem to belong to the palatine complex (Olmo-Enciso 2010, 96–97). But, from the mid-7th century, there was a reduction in the size of these buildings and a reuse of the neglected space for productive/artisanal activities (Gallego García 2010). However, by early 8th century, this probably impressive urban area was abandoned and, from the 9th century, intensive processes of spoliation are documented here (Olmo-Enciso and Castro Priego, in press). In any case, we need to bear in mind that we only know of a part of the site,[7] meaning we have a partial image of the whole suburban area.

The Vega Baja probably forms one of the few cases in *Hispania* at which the king and the court were able to eclipse the building capacity of the Church, with a project that probably changed greatly the city's surrounding area and, as a result, the projected image of the kingdom's capital.

A landscape without cities?

While the examples discussed above are a clear materiality of urban continuity, albeit altered, these same centuries witness a number of urban centres that entered a sharp decline that eventually led to wholesale loss or failure. For a long time, historiography (a full review of this is in Cepas Palanca 1997) has pointed to the Third Century Crisis as the leading cause of decay, with economic breakdown meaning lost patronage (on the loss of classical towns more widely, see Christie and Augenti 2012). In the Iberian Peninsula it is also necessary to consider as contributors the various barbarian raids, incursions and, ultimately, invasions, first from Mauri/Moors, then Franks around 260 and finally the 409 entry of Vandals, Alans and Suevi. Yet, although there is no doubt that the Roman Empire suffered a severe economic crisis and the Augustan taxation system broke down from mid-3rd century onwards (Harl 1996), in the Iberian Peninsula commerce at the local level and the industrial production for peninsular markets shows a strong continuity, comparable to long-distance commerce. In fact, in the coastal area of *Tarraconensis*, the modern Catalan region, imports (from Africa and Gallia especially) continued to arrive during the 3rd and 4th centuries, and even after the 470s when it fell to the Visigoths. The situation changed somewhat following the Byzantine occupation of the south-east of the Iberian Peninsula, and in this area the trade persisted even into the 7th century (Járrega Domínguez 2000; 2013; Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007, 599–601; Reynolds 2010). Nevertheless, these circumstances are not found across the whole Peninsula, and the absence of Mediterranean ceramic imports (Quirós Castillo 2011a, 298) in the northern sub-plateau, mainly in the Duero Valley area, from the 6th century onwards, indicates how this area seemingly lay outside the international circuits.

A first phase of the process of urban decay is often connected to a general indifference by the elites, who no longer had the (financial) capacity to invest in the infrastructure and the *decor* of the cities. Yet this argument falls down when one sees many examples of rebuilt or restored monuments or repaved streets, even if some public areas

started to change in their original use. A good example of this situation is the theatre of *Tarraco*, which, as noted above, was abandoned by the end of the 2nd century, and yet, just a few decades later, the city's amphitheatre saw a major restoration in 218 by order of Emperor Heliogabalus, while the circus continued in use into the 5th century (TED'A 1990).

Apart from the traumatic Third Century Crisis, one could question if some of the losses and transformations were the natural evolution of a too-rapid Romanisation or an over-ambitious early investment in towns. From an archaeological point of view, we can cite the examples of *Emporiae* and *Clunia*. The enormous *colonia* planned by Julius Caesar for *Emporiae*, contiguous to the earlier Greek town, covered nearly 25 ha and yet did not attract a larger population. In fact, already from the Julio-Claudian period, we can identify some abandonment of the new urban space. By the 4th century this area (the so-called 'neapolis' of some scholars) had become sand-covered, and also then saw use as a cemetery (Nolla Brufau 1993). The city overall shrank down to the area of the Greek town, occupying a small offshore islet, and remained so across the Visigothic and Arab periods (Aquilué 1999, 80–83; 2008).

Figure 7. Uxama *and* Termes*: two abandoned urban centres (image by P. Diarte-Blasco).*

The situation of *Clunia* is different: it is the only capital of the 14 *conventus* (or districts) forming the three Hispanic provinces (*Lusitania*, *Baetica* and *Tarraconensis*) that did not survive into/beyond Late Antiquity. Indeed, probably as a consequence of its artificial role in the territory, decay is evident already from the late 2nd century in most of its public buildings, with changes to their role and form progressing into the 5th century (Palol 1991). The city's demise is

clear in the fact that it was never made an episcopal see, even though – as in other 'failed sites' – it did retain a residual population after the 6th century. In the case of *Clunia*, therefore, change came before the Third Century Crisis and decay appears more the fault of internal, socio-economic factors.

One can also recognise a geographic determinism in this process, because, while the Ebro and Guadalquivir valleys seem to have been less affected by urban decay/loss, in the Duero Valley roughly three-quarters of the cities lost their urban characteristics in Late Antiquity or were abandoned (Quirós Castillo 2011a). In fact, across the whole Duero fluvial basin, after a rapid and often impressive early Roman urban development, towns show contraction from the 2nd century (Cepas Palanca 1997, 173–196). This territory, characterised by a much more ruralised Roman landscape (Díaz Martínez 1994; Chavarría Arnau 2006a), coincides with parts of both the Visigothic Kingdom and the Suevic Kingdom. However, a few towns did retain an economic and political role, such as the Augustan foundations of *Legio* (León), *Lucus*, *Bracara* and *Asturica*.

There are some notable examples of decay outside of this area, such as the well-known cases of Los Bañales (the original Roman name remains unknown) and *Bilbilis* in the *Tarraconensis* province, *Conimbriga* in *Lusitania*, and, in *Baetica*, *Munigua* (near to the small town of Villanueva del Río y Minas, Seville) and *Baelo Claudia*, both heavily damaged by an earthquake in the 3rd century AD. After this natural calamity, which probably affected most of the current region of Andalucía, many of the public spaces were repurposed, such as the theatre and the *forum* of *Baelo Claudia* and the baths and the *forum* of *Munigua*, colonised by houses especially during the 4th and the 6th centuries. Both cities suffered a complete abandonment, but in a gradual process, between the 6th and 8th centuries (Sillières 1997; Schattner 2003).

Nevertheless, it was in the inland territories of the Iberian Peninsula, the Duero River basin and the area of the contiguous modern regions of Guadalajara and Cuenca, in which the Roman 'urban project' did not succeed. Here, besides a few notable exceptions such as *Segobriga*, as a large planned city, most urban centres like *Numantia*, *Termes* and *Uxama* were little more than small towns. The latter, from the 6th century, became an episcopal see, although its elevated status is yet to be matched in the archaeology; in fact, the last public building activity so far documented relates to the 4th/5th century, when the defensive wall was built (García Merino and Sánchez Simón 1998, 13). Neither *Numantia* or *Termes* were episcopal

sees, although in the case of *Termes* there was at least a church active here in the 6th or 7th century, sited near the shrine of Our Lady of Termes (Gutierrez Dohijo 2003). The complete abandonment of both sites belongs to the 8th century (García Merino 2000; Dohijo 2010; Fig. 7).

In the nearby Cuenca region, the towns of *Segobriga*, *Valeria* and *Ercavica* also appear much reduced by this time, their *fora* and other classical structures long changed (Fuentes 2006, 114). And yet all three were episcopal sees during the Visigothic period, their bishops attending several Councils celebrated in *Toletum*, including the III Council (Flórez 1751, 70–72; 1752, 110–111; García Moreno 1974, nos 296–302, 131–133) – at which was sealed the spiritual and territorial unification of the Visigothic Kingdom.

This high level of urban loss in comparison with other peninsular areas shows a tendency towards what we can term a 'de-urbanised landscape', in which other forms of settlements were the basis of the social organisation in these inland territories in the late Roman and early medieval periods. It is true that, in all areas, most of the towns and cities were wholly new foundations under Rome (i.e. without indigenous pre-urban settlements), and some of these clearly established strong roots and held stable populations and hinterlands; but it is also true that for certain areas instabilities of diverse types meant that the Roman model of urban settlement was no longer useful or sustainable, and so, little by little, these centres failed. These therefore may have drifted or slipped out of the principal commercial circuits, and the local populations adapted to a more localised, self-sufficient economy; accordingly, it was no longer necessary to belong to great markets and infrastructures. It is perhaps inevitable that the 'disconnect' from the failing Roman Empire would be signalled most in these less centralised areas. What is less clear is whether there was a drift of some of the population away from these decaying towns to the larger, more active centres; archaeology cannot easily track such shifts, although the appearance of more houses in old public spaces in the continuing towns and the reactivation of other central places in the *territorium* – such as the hilltop sites discussed in Chapter 4 – could be signs of this.

Reccopolis and the birth of a new city

In this context of loss of a (overall restricted) number of urban centres in the Iberian Peninsula, we can observe between the second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 7th, with the consolidation of the Visigothic state, strong efforts to renew cities, expressed chiefly in

the proliferation of churches and other types of Christian buildings in the townscape (we should anticipate civic buildings, too, in this period, but archaeology struggles to identify these currently). In addition, there was a substantial move to make Toledo the sole capital of the kingdom. But perhaps most striking was the royal policy of founding new cities (Olmo-Enciso 2007, 189–192): three are recorded, *Reccopolis*, *Victoriacum* (both founded by King Leovigild) and *Ologicus*, although, unfortunately, the locations of the latter pair, both created in *Vasconia* in northern Spain, remain undiscovered and our only information on these comes from the *Chronica* of John of Biclar and the *Historia Gothorum* of Isidore of Seville, both contemporaries to their foundations.

Reccopolis (the archaeological site is located at Zorita de los Canes, Guadalajara) was founded as a physical manifestation of Leovigild's 'imperial' ideological project, in a clear attempt to align or match his kingdom with the Byzantine Empire. This process of *aemulatio imperii* is even more evident in the fact that *Reccopolis* was named to honour his son Reccared, just like the policy of late Roman and Byzantine emperors, including Justinian, who might name new cities or rename old ones (Olmo-Enciso 2008, 44). The importance of the Byzantine influence is evident in the configuration of this *ex-novo* city, in its palatine complex, its defences and the commercial area, all built in the first phase. But this city's splendid start stuttered and in the second phase, from the mid-7th century, *Reccopolis* is characterised by poorer quality constructions and a decay in the urban dynamic, and is often associated related with the wider crisis of the Visigothic state. However, the city remained active into the first Arab/Andalusi period and until the first half of the 9th century (Olmo-Enciso, 1998; 2008).

The city was founded in AD 578, and provided with an organised plan, centred on two road axes and with a clear hierarchisation of space, in which the main buildings occupied the elevated zone. The palatine complex[9] – with residential, storage and fiscal-administrative spaces and a church (Olmo-Enciso 2015) – has similar construction characteristics (with buttresses and *opus signinum* pavements) to the 6th-century *episcopium* and the *comes ciuitatis* palace in *Barcino*, and to the likely Suevic palace complex on the hill of Falperra in *Bracara* (Real 2001; Olmo-Enciso 2008). The *Reccopolis* complex, however, stands out for its impressive scale (Fig. 8).

The importance of *Reccopolis* for the Visigothic kings is evident not only in the high-quality and no doubt ornate buildings, but also in the presence of imported Mediterranean ceramics, which show its connection to wider trade networks and a wealth to forge this

connection; it is noticeable that such traded imports are practically non-existent in other cities of this area. Despite a weak archaeology, we should assume royal Toledo was also an economic participant and redistributive focus. Furthermore, both cities possessed a mint and supplied the large provinces of Carpetania and Celtiberia; other cities in these provinces, such as *Segobriga*, *Ercavica* and *Complutum*, despite being episcopal sees, lacked a mint. Both *Reccopolis*' and *Toletum*'s mints endured until the end of the Visigothic Kingdom (Olmo-Enciso 2008; Castro Priego 2014).

In the same context of renewal of cities, we can recognise also a number of revived or re-founded Roman towns, notably at El Tolmo de Minateda (Hellín, Albacete; Fig. 9) – the Visigothic site of *Eio* and the Muslim *Iyyuh* – located halfway between the southern and eastern Iberian coasts and in a strategic position between the Visigothic *Toletum* and the Byzantine provincial capital, *Carthago Spatia*. El Tolmo's importance as an urban centre had diminished in the High Empire, but in *c*. AD 600 an episcopal see (with an extraordinary episcopal complex comprising a large basilica, baptistery and palace) was created here (Abad Casal *et al.* 2000). Perhaps to be considered as part of the same process or programme is the construction of defensive walls at *Begastri* (located close to Cehegín, in the Murcia region). Interestingly, both towns had been reconquered by the Visigoths from the Byzantine territory and subsequently were promoted to episcopal sees in the 7th century, probably as counterpoints to the Byzantine episcopal sees of *Carthago Spartia* and *Ilici* (Gutiérrez Lloret *et al.* 2005).

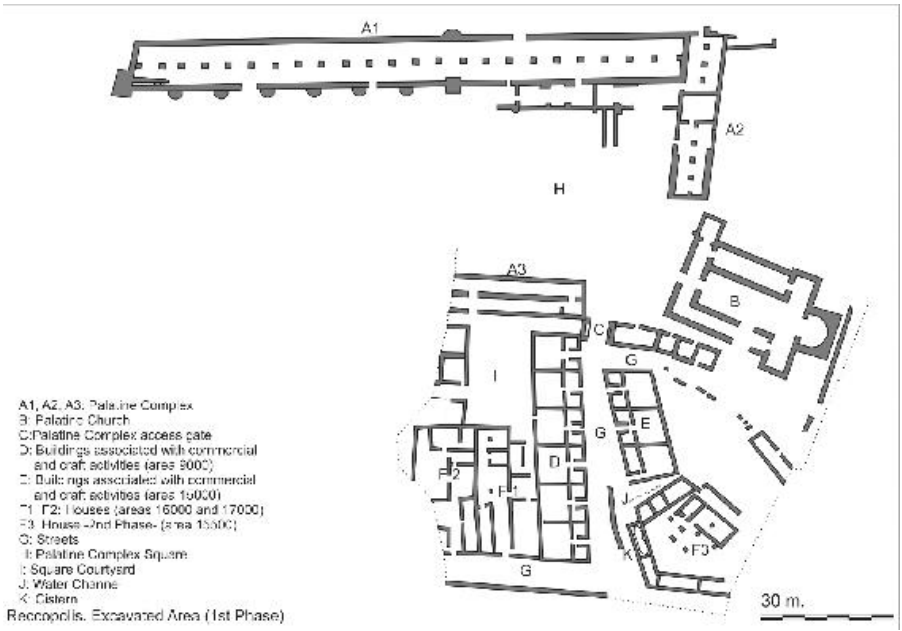

Figure 8. Reccopolis*: urban plan (image courtesy of Proyecto Recópolis. Universidad de Alcalá)*.

Figure 9. Aerial view of the site of Tolmo de Minateda (archivo fotográfico del Proyecto Tolmo de Minateda. Image courtesy of Sonia Gutierrez Lloret).

These new foundations and promotions, the role of Toledo as capital and the reinforcement of cities like *Emerita*, *Barcino*, *Tarraco*, *Caesaraugusta* and *Valentia* were key to the maintenance of the State structure and the tributary system which supported them. These cities formed an efficient network for controlling the territory, as also seen

by the foundation of *Ologicus* by King Swinthila in the first decades of the 7th century, funded by the tribute paid by the Vascones (*Isid., Hist. Goth.* 63, 10). Indeed, it is perhaps relevant to observe that both new urban foundations in Vasconia and the city of *Reccopolis* lay in the area which had seen many towns previously fade and even disappear – *Ercavica*, *Valeria*, *Segobriga* and so on – and probably formed a mode of territorial coercion and a response to the needs for economic, commercial and administrative central places in less urbanised areas.

A new townscape type for *Hispania*

By the early 2nd century AD, *Hispania* contained more than 300 *municipia* and about 30 *coloniae* (Kulikowski 2005), distributed between Andalusia, the coastal zones and along the main rivers – especially the Ebro and the Guadalquivir rivers – all of these areas with solid pre-Roman, Iberian roots and well populated (Bendala Galán *et al.* 1987). This situation overall did not drastically change over the next two or three centuries, and in reality we wait until the 7th and 8th centuries to see the complete abandonment of a variety of urban sites. This is not to deny, however, that the decay of these towns was underway long before, when the first symptoms of the progressive dismantling of the Roman Empire started to be evident. Nevertheless, although, as seen, there were far fewer new towns created in the Early Middle Ages than the number of those that failed in Late Antiquity, it is important to note that the main capitals and cities endured, albeit changed and redesigned, and with the majority of these enduring and expanding to the present day; only a scarce number, probably less than a quarter, were neglected, some even losing the *memoria* of their existence.

We must not ignore the fact that no other historical period in the Iberian Peninsula witnesses this same rate of urban decay, and it is difficult not to view this as a product of a turbulent phase – with the arrival of new martial populations, the breakdown of the Roman State, economic crises, altered production systems, local conflicts and so on. Indeed, across these late Roman and early medieval centuries, we have seen that in all towns and cities profound alterations to structures, qualities and infrastructures can be documented which change radically their physiognomy and, in some cases, considerably reduce their urban space and role.

Despite these upheavals and changes, the Iberian Peninsula continued to be highly urbanised. In this regard we must recognise that by c. AD 600 the Visigothic Kingdom was firmly established and

displayed power and churches in the urban arena. If this had been a much more fractured state, then we might expect a much weaker urban imprint. Indeed, it is noticeable that, when the State does weaken in the late 7th and 8th century, so towns do struggle more.

The archaeology is still limited on some levels, but it demonstrates clearly that the evolution of the Hispanic cities across this period can be considered only on a one-by-one basis, because the process, above all from the 4th and 5th centuries, seems to be unique and independent in every case, in which each *curia* continued to be a crucial part, responding to the new necessities of the population. The image projected is that this process was characterised by an enormous heterogeneity, with different responses and solutions to similar issues. There was no general strategy in the treatment of these new requirements. While we can in some cases perceive decision-making by a local power (a council, a duke or perhaps a bishop), such as when there appears a systematic spoliation of an ancient public building complex for the construction of, for example, new city walls, yet in many other cases it is easier to claim largely unchecked or unregulated activities; thus, when domestic structures start to be installed in abandoned buildings or when houses started exploiting street porticoes, it is difficult to think of a careful and ordered programme at play. Nonetheless, a level of order was still required, and perhaps we need to think of different levels of tolerance by the municipal authorities, whoever they were.

This evolution 'without strategy' seems to change during the 6th and 7th centuries, when there is a clear pre-eminence of Christian buildings – and presumably also of the civic ones – emerging in the urban plan. For the very first time, in many decades, almost a century, there is a local power, represented by the bishop and the *comes ciuitatis,* with a plan, in which religion and the consolidation of the State formed the pillars of the new urbanism. This seems valid across all the powers in the Peninsula – Suevic, Byzantine and Visigothic – although our current levels of evidence do not allow detailed comparisons. In all three areas, the bishop and the residual urban elite (with clerics and elites potentially the same) were the leading forces in an urban scenario very deeply transformed, but in which the Church stood out.

What seems not to change in this period is the role of the surviving cities as administrative, economic, political, ideological and, of course, religious centres. While these were more functional spaces overall, with reduced monumental display and far less private input, except in terms of housing and workshops, they were still active and still

productive, thus serving as central places for landscapes. These central places then constituted the basis of the social structure and the State. Accordingly, as will be seen in Chapter 4, the configuration of new rural models of settlement and exploitation of resources are directly related with this modified urban network that shaped the Iberian Peninsula in the Early Middle Ages.

Notes

1 For these territories and their organisation and frontiers, see Chapter 7.
2 On the transition from Arianism to Catholicism in the Visigothic Kingdom as recorded in the III Council of Toledo (589) and its importance in the Visigothic State and its organisation, see Chapter 2, pp. 26–27.
3 The Suevic Kingdom and its historical evolution are briefly explored in Chapter 2, pp. 21–22.
4 A further element to note relates to the raising of street levels and pavements, as signs of lack of maintenance, dumping of materials and organic deposits as well as the result of demolition work. Useful data have been gathered in *Gerunda*, thanks to archaeological surveys conducted in the area of Pia Almoina (Nolla Brufau *et al.* 2009).
5 This subject is discussed in detail in Chapter 5, pp. 82–93.
6 This book follows the edition and translation of A. Maya, 1992. In this case, the specific reference is IV. IX.7.
7 The excavations stopped abruptly in 2010, as a consequence of the economic crisis; the site has not reopened.
8 The rural responses to this absence of urban centres in some territories are analysed in the next chapter.
9 According to Arce (2015), the building identified as a *palatium* is in reality a *horreum* (granary). This view is not widely accepted.

Chapter 4

Far from the ancient *villae*: new forms of habitat in rural contexts

Introduction: charting change in the landscape

Knowledge about the rural landscapes of Roman *Hispania* has grown significantly in recent decades, thanks especially to the increase in archaeological excavations (both research-led and rescue) and in new projects centred on intensive surveys of the countryside. As a result, traditional views of the Roman rural landscape as an organised space dominated by an elite residing in *villas* or *villae*, overseeing and directing the exploitation of resources, have been much challenged. In fact, the idea of *villae* – with their residential and multiple economic functions – as the basic units of farming, has shifted to a more complex vision, in which other types of settlements, such as village-like communities (*pagi*) as well as lesser dispersed habitats, such as *casae* and *tuguria*, also play an active, if understudied, role (Tarpin 2002).

However, a problem remains that there is still little confirmation or exploration of these lesser habitats, which are recorded otherwise by literary and/or epigraphic sources, but are virtually indetectable in the archaeological record. By contrast, of course, the *villae* have been long recognised, or at least their *pars urbana* – the residential and reception complex, well known, in many cases, for solid architectural form and their mosaic decoration – whereas the *partes rusticae*, the productive and storage spaces, are much more weakly studied. New studies have enabled better recognition of *vici*, which sit between estates and towns in terms of being small conurbations, containing administrative, economic and religious services and industrial units. Potentially, they are centres for *villa* estate workers, but the connections have not been explored yet. It is argued, however, that *vici* in general had indigenous origins and are in fact more common in

less Romanised areas (Curchin 1985), such as the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula (Pérez Losada 1996; 2002). Other rural components which link town and country are the largely isolated units of *mansiones*, *stationes* and *mutationes* associated with the road network, providing rest-stops for travellers and for official messengers and their beasts of burden; however, presently only a few examples are known – notably the *mansio* of *Ildum* (Vilanova d'Alcolea, Castellón), between *Dertosa* and *Saguntum* (Arasa 2013), and the *mutationes* on the routeway *Ab Asturica Burdigalam* (Núñez and Aquilué 2006).

The *villae*, therefore, continue to be the most significant and best-known element of the Roman and late Roman rural organisation. The origin of many of these lies in the later Republican period, when many cities and towns were founded and their hinterlands began to see more intensive cultivation and when specific landowners came to the fore. In *Hispania*, archaeology has identified a growth in the early Empire, but then a particularly intense period of restoration comes between the 2nd century and the earlier 3rd century AD, which usually consisted of the construction of highly differentiated residential sectors. Subsequently, traditional historiography (see Bravo 2012 for an interesting review) argues for problems at and some abandonments of *villas* linked to the impact of the so-called Third Century Crisis with its economic upheavals as well as civil wars, and, especially in the north-east of the Peninsula, incursions by Franks; however, it is difficult to directly link damage and/or abandonment to such barbarian raids (see discussions in Chavarría Arnau 2006b; 2007a). In any case, archaeologically, the main problem for these decades consists of a scarce definition in the archaeological record of the 3rd century (Buxeda and Tuset 1995) and disputes around the moment of transition between the main chronological guider of this period: the *Hispanic Terra Sigillata* and the *Late Hispanic Terra Sigillata* (TSHT). While some authors think that production of TSHT started by the mid-4th century (Paz Peralta 1991, 229; 2008, 506–507), for others (*e.g.* Vigil-Escalera 2015, 101–155, 121, 149), this typology could date back to the very beginning of the 4th century.

What certainly stands out in the 4th century is the growth of rural aristocratic power, reflected in an explosion in the residential architecture of the *villae*, with a profusion of quality decorative elements and an array of monumental (especially reception and display) spaces in the residential sectors: such is very prominent in *villae* in the inland territories such as the Ebro, Duero and Tajo valleys (including Lusitania). Key examples include La Olmeda (Palencia), Cuevas de Soria (Soria), La Malena (Zaragoza), Torre de Palma

(Monforte, Portugal) and Dehesa de la Cocosa (Badajoz). By contrast, however, in the eastern coastal area and in the south of the Peninsula, the same century sees a transition in role and space, whereby productive zones became more prevalent to the residential ones (Chavarría Arnau 2006b, citing sites like Torre Llauder and Cans Sans in Barcelona and Vilauba in Gerona). We might highlight how in the towns of the peninsula, as identified in Chapter 3, the opulence of the Ebro and Duero *villas* is not matched: instead, we find a more functional domestic architecture, including houses 'colonising' old public buildings. Did the wealthy elite of the countryside avoid the towns in these late Roman centuries?

Yet, from the 5th century, many of the magnificent *villae* themselves began the process of deep transformation away from opulence to fractured and weakened use, to reuse by different habitat types, or even to abandonment – transformations that are seen in other parts of the old Western Roman Empire (cf. Wickham 2005). As a result, across the 5th to 8th centuries AD in the Hispanic Peninsula we observe a growing variety of rural settlements and types, including the formation of villages and the occupation/reoccupation of hilltop sites – all with implications for populations, ownership and land use (Ariño Gil 2013; see discussion below). Moreover, from a linguistic point of view, the term *villa*, in the (limited) contemporary sources, sees a reduction in use from *c.* AD 400, while different terms, like *castellum*, start to appear at this moment in the texts. Unfortunately, the *castella* reported in many texts, from Hydatius to John of Blicar and Isidore of Seville (who used the triad of *castellum*, *vicus* and *pagus*, see *Etym.* XV, 2, 7 and 11), seem to refer a wide range of secondary clusters bellow the *civitates*, but with different and complex meanings: *castellum* is sometimes interchangeable with *castrum*, signifying a military role, but elsewhere without any defensive connotation (Isla Frez 2001, 11–12; recent analyses by Carrié 2012; 2013).

Interestingly, however, our available historical sources (some contemporary to these mutations in the Iberic landscape) reveal that, despite the settlement of barbarians in *Hispania* (Arce 2005, 234–243; 2012), the image of strong *possessores* or landholders does not seem to change dramatically, since many continue to be documented, with Visigothic and Suevic elites joining with the old Roman elite in landed control and display. One useful example comes from the *De Bello Gothico* (V, 12, 50) of the historian Procopius of Caesarea, writing in Constantinople in the 530s–540s, who relates that Theudis, *comes armiger* of the Ostrogothic King Theodoric, was sent to *Hispania* to help take care of matters in the Peninsula; as mentioned above, once

there he married a rich Hispano-Roman wife, who owned substantial properties in an inland zone of the Peninsula – we hear how Theudis was able to assemble 2,000 soldiers as a personal bodyguard from these estates (Arce 2018). A later text, the *Vita Sancti Aemiliani*, composed in the 7th century (Valcárcel 1997; Castellanos 1995; 2004), similarly informs us that in the mid-6th century the *senator* Honorius and his relatives were a significant family of *potentiores*, owning properties in the Upper Ebro area (Espinosa Ruiz 2003, 79–109; 2011, 181). A century later, in the early 8th century, from Arab sources, we hear of a *possessor* called Theodomir, who was associated with the courts of kings Egica and Wittiza; as a major landowner in south-eastern Spain, in the current Murcia region, Theodomir reached an agreement with the invading Muslim forces, by which he and the inhabitants of the territory that he administered paid a tribute in exchange for keeping his lands and properties (Gutiérrez Lloret 1996).

The archaeology so far undertaken, while observing some changes in the landscape – and especially the towns – supports such cited documentary references for no major change in the forms of exploitation of the post-classical countrysides of the Peninsula after the Germanic invasion and their settlement, with a concentration of country estates continuing as the basis of elite rural organisation. However, as will be detailed below, this 'continuity' can often mask changes in the physical and structural form of these estates.

At the same time that we see a permanence of an aristocracy exercising strong control of their properties, we can observe a broader range of site types appearing in the landscape, evident in the emergence of scattered peasant settlements (Wickham 2005, 488–495). Within this panorama, what is crucial to consider is how and when the network of settlements was created, how these started to fill the landscape and how far they lay under the protection of large landowners. The collection of taxes, the application of the law (according to the *Lex Visigothorum*, landowners had juridical power over the population on their lands) and the privatisation of military functions (larger landowners had their own private militia) were the real changes in the *territoria* (Díaz Martínez 2000).[1] The dispersed estates and most of the peasant settlements were under direct control of the *possessores*, who, on diverse levels, became their own military, fiscal and legal officers.

A further important ingredient in this investigation of the late Roman and early medieval Iberian landscapes is the role of the Church, whose presence in the countryside comes to be marked by

large ecclesiastical and especially monastic properties.[2] What seems clear is that the Christianisation of rural areas started later than that of the towns, and so the visibility of the religion and its influence effectively only emerges with the consolidation of the Visigothic State. From that moment, tension between the increasing independence of the rural churches and the role of the diocesan church was a constant; at the same time, a growing autonomy of the countryside with regard to the kingdom's cities would configure a diverse social and economic landscape.

Dismantling the Roman aristocratic organisation of the landscape

The transformation and reoccupation or adaptation of the aristocratic *villae* are undoubtedly the first strongly tangible symptoms of the new reality, which started to be established from the second half of the 5th century. Prior to this, from the first decades of that century, many of the *villae* lost their aristocratic 'signatures' in terms of their monumentalised and ornate rooms and facilities in their *pars urbana*, which had seen intensive investment in the 4th century as part of the phenomenon of the concentration of ownership. The break-up of the *villae* spaces is generally attributed to reduced economic circumstances as the Western Roman Empire started to struggle and as provinces became more and more detached (Ariño Gil and Díaz Martínez 2002; Chavarría Arnau 2007a; Christie 2011, 205–209).

Around 450, the majority of ancient *villae* had lost the characteristics of aristocratic residence, and had been replaced by huts, silos and *fossae* – the latter features almost always focused on the processes of agricultural production and storage, craft activities and refuse deposition. In some cases, however, the chronology of loss and change can be often delayed, especially if we take into account the style of the mosaics, such as at the *villae* of Estada (Huesca), La Dehesa de la Coscosa (Badajoz) and Vilagrassa (Lérida), where the floors can be dated to the end of the 5th or early 6th century (Fig. 10), signifying some ongoing wealth, display and artistic skills (Gorges 1979; Chavarría Arnau 2006b, 25–27); we can even observe the restoration of and repairs to baths in the *villa* of Cal·lípolis (Tarrgona) in the 6th century (Macías Solé 2000) and, in the *villa* of Almenara de Adajas-Puras (Valladolid), where restorations to the mosaics and the baths come after the mid-4th century, when the residential part of the *villa* was built. Following the authors' hypothesis, the cessation of the aristocratic use of the *villa* started after the mid-5th century, although

agrarian activity at the *fundus* was maintained, attested by the site's palynological record (García Merino and Sánchez Simón 2017, 175–177).

Figure 10. Mosaic from the villa of Estada, Huesca (photo: J. Garrido. Image courtesy of

Museo de Zaragoza).

Yet these instances are exceptions in a general picture of mutations, which traditional historiography has linked with a period of destruction caused first by the incursions of Suevi, Vandals and Alans, and then by the conflicts between these populations, Hispano-Romans and Visigoths. However, there is no direct accord between these textual sources and the archaeological record, because, in general, it is not possible to identify destruction levels in the 5th-century layers at *villas* (Chavarría Arnau 2007a, 70–71). It is certainly the case that the politico-military struggles and the processes of collapse in the late Roman economic and social structure affected the rural organisation and production and thus the ability of the old landed elite to maintain their *villae*; but with the available archaeological information it is currently impossible to point to a unidirectional relationship with the irruption and settlement of these barbarian *gentes* and the transformation of these elite rural complexes. Yet what can be stated securely is that, by the end of the 5th century, these kinds of aristocratic residences had been almost completely cancelled out from the Iberian landscape. In fact, between that moment and the arrival of Muslims, archaeologically for the whole of the Peninsula only two examples of ongoing aristocratic residences can be cited: Pla de Nadal (Riba-roja de Túria, Valencia) and Algezares (Murcia).

The first of these, Pla de Nadal, has seen excavation which has identified a main area formed by a large and rich Visigothic period building, with Roman-Byzantine-style decoration. This property clearly had a Christian owner who used Latin, as deduced from the decorative and epigraphic details. In fact, recently, the complex has been attributed to the *dux* Theodomir noted above. The property was looted before it was burnt down; ceramics found in the abandonment level establish the date of its destruction probably very late in the 7th century (Ribera i Lacomba 2005b).

Algezares is a much less secure case: apart from the known church here, a large quadrangular edifice of the 5th century has been traced, which was restored in the 6th century, yet likely abandoned by AD 600. The complex seemingly had a representative-aristocratic character, but it is difficult currently to determine if it was a civil or an ecclesiastical construction (Ramallo Asensio *et al.* 2012).

Both cases are unique in our broader picture of the Hispanic countryside, in which it is difficult to identify where the ancient landowners were now located: some perhaps retreated to towns; some may have continued to live at the *villa* sites but in more humble form;

some may have migrated to different settlements in the landscape, such as hilltop villages (see below). Yet the process of *villa* loss is not homogeneous and, as noted above, transformations had started by the end of the 3rd century in the eastern coastal and the southern areas, whereas they were delayed until the first decades of the 5th century elsewhere in the Peninsula. Ultimately, in both areas, we observe how the aristocratic residential suites became neglected, as often productive or industrial works were instead imposed, sometimes directly over the former, once proud mosaics. This 'productive trend' is evident in a number of well-excavated examples, such as the *villae* of Vilauba (Camòs, Gerona) and Puig Rodón (Corça, Gerona), which saw wine and oil production plants installed and maintained until the 6th or perhaps even the 7th century (Castanyer *et al.* 2011; Nolla Brufau and Casas, 1990); the *villa* of Torre Llauder (Mataró, Barcelona), where a wine production installation, with at least 18 *dolia* and three tanks, was installed in the peristyle gallery and in several rooms once paved with mosaics (Prevosti and Clariana 1993; Macías Solé 2005); however, the actual presses are not yet identified here, unlike at the *villae* of Can Sans, Sant Boi and L'Espelt (all in the province of Barcelona).

Such production activities over and within the ancient *villae* depended on location and agricultural focus: it seems fairly common to see presses and rooms for olive oil production in inland territories, as at Monte do Meio (Beja, Portugal), while in coastal areas the reuse of structures, quite often the thermal/bath complexes, was geared more for fish-processing, as attested in the *villae* of Baños de la Reina (Alicante) and Torreblanca del Sol (Marbella, Málaga) (Puertas Tricas 1992; Abascal Palazón *et al.* 2000).

Along with these activities, the creation of modest spaces for habitation is another generally observed process, which led in many cases to the cancelling out of the original plan, as rooms became blocked up for dumps, partitions are inserted – these mainly built with poor quality or non-durable materials such as wood and clay – and hearths and silos cut into the floors. Examples of such 'compartmentalisation' by poorer structures include the *villa* of La Torrecilla (Getafe, Madrid), where the modified usage persisted at least until the 7th century, and El Romeral (Albesa, Lérida), where this lower-level domestic reoccupation ran from the 5th to 7th century. Although postholes cutting into mosaics might seem a clear signal of this type of occupation, sometimes interpretation and dating are not easy. Indeed, there may have been a normal tendency for site reuse to gather towards the peripheral, not former core built zones of

the *villae* (Gurt i Esparraguera and Navarro 2005); thus, at the Plaza Mayor area of Castellar del Vallès (Barcelona), a small village of timber huts grew up between the decayed *villa*'s productive and residential sectors (Roig Buxó 2009, 215–217).

These domestic and productive uses in all probability can be related to an emergence of graveyards and small chapels or churches set up in or near these ancient *villae*, although, unfortunately, dating is again problematic, since the churches cannot be closely assigned and most graves lack accompanying goods. Sometimes, only one or two isolated tombs are known, as at the *villa* of L'Aiguacuit (Tarrasa, Barcelona), but in other cases extensive burial grounds have been excavated, including that at the *villa* of Aguilafuente (Santa Lucía, Segovia), where, theoretically, deposits/finds could indicate the presence of Visigoths (Lucas and Viñas 1977). For the most part, however, it is very difficult to assign a cultural and chronological horizon to these burials.

Nevertheless, what is important to observe is that, over the ancient *villae*, actual settlements were being established, sometimes only farms and others villages, such as in examples of the Madrid region like El Pelicano, La Loranca, Prado Galápagos, Tinto Juan de la Cruz and so on, that had associated necropoleis, dated to between the second half of the 5th and at least the 7th century (Vigil-Escalera 2007). The *villae* of Darrò and Can Cabassa and the cited *villa* of the Plaza Mayor area of Castellar del Vallès, all in the Barcelona region, and El Munts (Tarragona), with a necropolis of *c.* 170 tombs, and with a chronological arc from the mid-4th century until the 6th or 7th century, are also good examples of this funerary presence, signifying stable local communities. Both areas, namely central Spain and the north-east, have been well studied, but this phenomenon appeared in most peninsular areas, such as in the surroundings of the *villa* of Torre Uchea (Hellín, Albacete), which, pivoting between Byzantine and Visigothic control, held a significant number of peasant-village sites, with necropoleis and silos (Gutiérrez Lloret and Grau Mira 2012).

Some but not all of these necropoleis are set in association with cult structures, such as small shrines and churches. Potentially, these were only established once the former residential use had vanished (Chavarría Arnau 2007a, 143), although sometimes these could coexist, as in the (problematic) examples of *villae* of Parpalinas (Pipaona de Ocón, La Rioja) and Fortunatus (Fraga, Huesca). In the latter, the first phase of the church is of *c.* AD 420–430, although the complex does feature an earlier, late 4th-century mosaic with a chi-rho symbol – plus the name of Fortunatus, the presumed owner then.

This first church is thus interpreted as a private oratory or *martyrium*, whereas in a second phase, when the apse was built (in the earlier 6th century), a basilica is presumed (Godoy Fernández 1995, 230–232); however, other scholars prefer to see this as a basilica from the outset (*e.g.* Sales Carbonell 2012, 85–88). The case of the *villa* at Parpalinas is interesting, it is recorded in the noted *Vita Sancti Aemiliani* as the property of the *senator* Honorius; here a church was built between the end of the 5th century and the first quarter of the 6th (Espinosa Ruiz 2003; 2006b). Neither church survived beyond the Islamic conquest of the early 8th century.[3]

In most cases of cemetery and associated church, construction of the latter seems not to have come prior to the 6th century, and perhaps the church not always does precede the burial ground. There is an occasional use of space within the old *villa* residential complex for the church, as at the Portuguese site of Monte da Cegonha and the *villa* of 'De la piscina' (Guarromán, Jaén), where, after abandonment of the *pars urbana* by the early 5th century and the reutilisation of some of the space with agricultural/industrial activities, a church and a baptistery were built in both sites. At El Saucedo (Talavera de la Reina, Toledo), a church was built towards the end of the 5th century or in the early 6th, by adapting part of the *villa*'s *balneum*. Elsewhere, churches were built close to the *villa*, but not over their main structures, directly in the *pars rustica* or, sometimes, exploiting former *mausolea,* as at La Cocosa (Badajoz), where the cult building was apparently in use at the same time that the residential sector was reoccupied by several domestic units (Chavarría Arnau 2007a, 143–152).

The birth of villages and hamlets

While these more functional domestic units and productive activities were being established in many of the ancient, likely semi-ruinous v*illae*, a new type of settlement, quite diverse from the previous Roman structures, started to appear in the Hispanic landscape, many spanning the late 5th to mid-8th centuries. On some levels these sites had a similar morphology to the ones created over the *villae*, in terms of small huts (some of sunken-featured form), timber-built structures, productive and storage spaces with silos and *fossae*, burials, and with the 'industrial' and domestic components in close association; in addition, their material culture and basic evolution were comparable.

Accordingly, archaeological studies have shown the emergence of a fairly dense network of peasant settlements that can be labelled as villages and hamlets. These sites could appear in the same territory as

the reworked *villae*, as can be seen in the Madrid region, in which, across an area of 800 km2, more than 60 peasant settlements of this period have been identified. Probably the most significant examples are El Pelícano and Gózquez. On the one hand, at El Pelícano, a stable village was set up by the mid-5th century directly over the *villa* remains, and an associated necropolis was imposed around the former *dominus'* monumental mausoleum; by the mid-6th century, a new community arose to the east of this cemetery. Gózquez, on the other hand, was an *ex-novo* settlement, formed seemingly by two neighbouring groups with a (presumably shared) necropolis between (Vigil-Escalera 2007; 2009; Fig. 11).

Neither the *ex-novo* villages nor those set over the ancient *villae* developed any clear social differentiation, with no evident higher-status structures or spatial configuration; rather, we can point to these as stable peasant settlements with a formalised social structure. Thus, in the 12 excavated units known in Gózquez – here, as elsewhere, the general size of these settlements ranged between a dozen and two dozen domestic units – there is no strong difference in the organisation or size of the buildings, or in the materials found in relation with these.

However, a key problem with the identification and interpretation of these settlements is the scarce level of technical development and our reliance on negative archaeological features, namely postholes and pits. Moreover, occasionally we have traces of a rural cemetery seemingly in isolation, but most probably to be associated with a community, either nucleated or scattered. Thus, for example, the burials of 116 persons have been excavated at Aldaieta, but, as yet, the location, size and duration of the attendant village or farms/hamlets are unknown (Azkarate Garai-Olaun 1996; 1999). Individual farms are, of course, more problematic to locate, but a combination of rescue excavation work plus archaeological prospection in recent years has enabled recognition of a number of these lesser sites within the Peninsula, including La Erilla (Puebla de Arganzón, Burgos) in the Basque Country area, a single-family farm with two huts and ten silos or storage pits. Most probably some villages originated from a growth and merging of such farms (see discussions in Quirós Castillo 2009).

Figure 11. Plan of the village of Gózquez (image courtesy of A. Vigil-Escalera).

Surveys so far point to a relative scarcity of villages and hamlets in the Basque Country until the 8th century, in contrast with the Duero basin, where the numbers of villages signify a fairly busy exploitation of the landscape, with these sites generally set on lower to middle slopes and in the plain (Tejerizo García 2013). Part of the Suevic Kingdom lay in this Duero area, and one can observe that there is no significant difference in settlement format from the nearby Visigothic territories; potentially, the low number of *civitates* may have favoured the creation, from the 4th to 6th century, of the subsequent settlement structure of farms and hamlets (Sánchez Pardo 2008); furthermore, it has been argued that the origins of many agricultural terraces in this area lie between the 5th and 8th centuries (Ballesteros-Arias and Blanco-Rotea 2009; Ballesteros-Arias 2010). The main difference here with other peninsular areas can probably be related to its brief time in the Islamic orbit and to the stable and constant occupation of a majority of these rural sites through into the 13th century (Bouhier 2001). Indeed, from the end of the 8th century, there was the progressive integration of the region into the Asturian Kingdom (for more information about this process, see Baliñas 2002), coinciding with an important increase in ecclesiastical foundations in this period, and within a general framework of continuity with the basic models of rural society over the subsequent centuries.

On the eastern coast, in the Byzantine province, the decay of the *villae* and the growth of *ex- novo* settlements was not substantively different to sequences seen in the Visigothic territories. New villages with associated burial areas include Loma Lencina and Loma Eugenia; such sites usually occupied hills in fertile areas (Gutiérrez Lloret and Grau Mira 2012). No substantial changes came to the region's landscape articulation, even after the Visigothic takeover in *c.* 625.

In Cataluña, although a more densely urbanised area – notably in

the littoral zone – there was a similar process of creation of *ex-novo* open village and hamlet sites in the plains, primarily from the 6th century. Notable is El Bovalar (Serós, Lérida), a Visigothic settlement with basilica (Palol 1989; 1999, 145–146), until its destruction in the 8th century; however, a recent re-examination of the evidence has proposed that this was in fact a monastic complex (Gurt i Esparraguera 2007). More typical are villages with associated necropoleis, although so far none feature a related church. Interesting examples have been identified close to *Barcino*: the settlements of Can Gambús-1 and Los Mallols, dating to between the 6th and the mid-7th or even 8th centuries, at which huts and numerous grain storage pits or silos (*c.* 230 silos in Can Gambús-1 and *c.* 140 silos in Los Mallols) have been explored (Roig Buxó 2009, 224–229).

Can Gambús-1 and Los Mallols were located close to each other and lay in fertile areas. Indeed, elsewhere in the Peninsula, we see comparable open settlements exploiting adjoining agricultural lands and fields. As always, there were some exceptions, such as in the southern region, in the Guadalquivir Valley, where open settlements close to watercourses tend to be quitted, while in the 6th century there seems to have been a preference for sites in the plains overseeing communication routes (fluvial and terrestrial), such as those in alignment with the Roman road towards Antequera in the Seville area; and in the Dos Hermanas area along the *Via Augusta* (García Vargas and Vázquez Paz 2012, 245–246). Different natural resources were the prime focus in other cases, as around Almería (Rodriguez López and Cara Barrionuevo, 1989) and Sierra Nevada (Román Punzón and Martín Civantos 2014, 63–65), where sites show a closer relationship with hunting and mining. In all of these site types we should expect communal activities, such as livestock herding, pasturage of flocks, wood collection and charcoal burning. This is where the input of archaeobotanical and archaeozoological data from excavations can be so important.

The growing data from the Basque Country and the Cantabrian Mountains in particular (Fernández Mier and Quirós Castillo 2015) show direct links between the consolidation of the village network at a later stage and a developing exploitation of agricultural, livestock and natural resources, sometimes developed in communal areas. This area is also very interesting for observing the process of colonisation of new spaces; peasant settlements appeared in areas where, frequently, no previous occupation has been traced, and it seems that initially they did not generate a solid network of villages early on, as occurs in the Madrid zone or in the Duero Valley, but rather many

single-family farms and small villages, including the sites of Zaballa (this settlement almost fully excavated), Aistra and Zornoztegi. Only from around AD 700 might we state that a network of villages was created (Quirós Castillo 2009; 2011b). In Zornoztegi (Salvatierra, Álava), for example, there was a low-level occupation during the 6th and 7th centuries, developing into a village during the 8th century, when the habitat extended to 1 ha, with around ten domestic units; at Zaballa (Iruña de Oca, Álava), another single-family site – identified thanks a number of domestic silos, cut directly in the rock, dated via the organic material record – was established during the 6th and 7th centuries, evolving into a large village in the same period as Zornoztegi (Quirós Castillo 2012, 589–596); in time, the family farm or farms were replaced by a village, with a stable community of peasants dedicated to diversified agrarian activities. As in other peninsular areas, the size and conformation of the domestic units of these villages do not really allow us to see any hierarchy or social differentiation, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

A new type of occupation: the short-lived hilltop sites

The occupation of hilltop sites is viewed as one of the most representative phenomena of the Visigothic period, and this can be extended also to the Suevic and, on a lower level, to Byzantine territories in the Peninsula. It is argued that these upland seats became new foci for socio-political and economic articulation, arising probably as a consequence of the political instability and the disarticulation of the old Roman rural order. In fact, based on the historical sources and some archaeological findings, it has been suggested that these sites became core to the territorial administration and tax collection and may well have formed power centres and, in time, featured fortified residences for new local elites (Castellanos and Martín Viso 2005; Gutiérrez González 2014). What cannot be determined (but cannot be excluded) is whether some of these sites were founded by former *villa* owners.

There is a generally similar morphology to these fortified seats, with plans of more or less oval or circular shape, dependent on the shape of the natural site occupied, and of fairly compact dimensions. The smallest one known so far is Puig Rom (Rosas, Gerona), at just 1.2 ha, while one of the largest, Castro Ventosa (León), covers only *c*. 6.5 ha (Ariño Gil 2013, 110–116). The chronology of hilltop occupation varies somewhat, but many of them seem to have originated in the 5th

century and then were abandoned in the 7th century. However, there are also some examples, such as El Castillón (Santa Eulalia de Tábara, Zamora), Cabeza de Navasangil (Solsancho, Avila) and el Cristo de San Esteban (Muelas del Pan, Zamora), these all in the Duero basin, whose occupation was fairly short-term, perhaps lasting only until the end of the 6th century (Vigil-Escalera and Tejerizo García 2014); and there are also a few delayed examples like the *castellum* of Puig Rom (Rosas, Gerona), a well-defended hilltop settlement, *c*. 225 m above sea level, whose chronology runs from the 6th century and fully across the 7th, failing only in the early 8th century (Palol 2004).

However, there are some hilltop sites, above all in the Duero Valley, that, based on documents and chronicles of the 9th and 10th centuries, potentially endured into the Middle Ages; these include Tedeja (Trespaderne, Burgos), which continued until the 11th/12th centuries. This strategic hilltop site, not only because of its particular topographic conditions and its visual oversight of a wide territory, but also because of its control of the valley of the Ebro – a natural and regular route of communication – had solid defensive walls with towers, whose first phase of construction lies in the second half of the 5th century (Palomino Lázaro *et al.* 2012). Indeed, one can highlight how the name Castile, which was used to this area from the second half of the 9th century, refers to *castella* (fortified sites/castles), numerous in this area (Martín Viso 2006a). However, there is a problem in that archaeological scrutiny of these sites is not substantial and, as yet, it tends to struggle to confirm this *longue durée* use, instead usually finding evidence of hiatus, discontinuities and several degrees of occupation of these settlements.

Unfortunately, there are only a few examples for which archaeology offers some insights into the internal organisation of these sites, because in many cases scholars tend to focus their study on the defences – with the intrinsic problems related with dating of these structures. A well-known example, however, is El Castillón: long after a probably sporadic use in the Iron Age, a stable settlement of this hilltop appeared in the 5th century AD and had a brief life until the mid-6th century. Survey has shown the existence of 24 structural units, four of which were of large dimensions; excavation of one of these structures, sited in the central area, revealed a building of 23 × 12 m, articulated in eight rooms. Its walls were built in mortar-bonded stone, covered by a pale plaster. The roof was built with vegetal material – mainly wood – and the covered by slates. It has been proposed that this building was used as central storage and preparation space for foodstuffs. This building, however, did not

endure into the 6th century and, overall, the site in the 6th century shows only a modest occupation with a diverse organisation of the space (Sastre *et al.* 2014). Another example where we can identify some elements of its organisation is El Cristo de San Esteban: this site also had a protohistoric occupation of the Bronze and Iron Ages, and then a gap in site usage until a new stable settlement was set up from the end of the 4th century until the early 7th century. The settlement of 4.5 ha (less than half of which was habitable, because of the topography) is surrounded by a defensive wall, not always visible, that, it seems, was built in haste (Nuño Gonzalez and Domínguez Bolaños 2014). The domestic spaces – some partially excavated in the bedrock – were also built with stone, but without mortar or slate roofs, and had a single room without divisions, although it is possible to recognise some kind of internal organisation; these houses were independent, with different orientations and with no evident planning in the distribution of the spaces (Domínguez Bolaños and Nuño Gonzalez 2014). Certainly, these houses appear more modest than the ones described for El Castillón, but it is important to bear in mind that most of the site has not been excavated.

While this hilltop-site phenomenon appears across most of the peninsula, there does seem to be a clear predominance in the north-western area – territories of both the Visigoths and Suevi – where the low density of urban centres is noticeable. In fact, many of the hilltop settlements lay on the margins of urban territories or else occupied spaces lacking towns, presumably articulating and overseeing the populations in these 'empty' zones (Quirós Castillo 2011a, 291–293); one such example could be the enclosed hilltop site of Cerro del Castillo, located between the towns of *Cauca* and *Segontia* (Fuentes and Barrio 1999; Gonzalo González 2006).

Even though our current picture of distribution might be distorted through levels of archaeological survey, the apparent lower intensity of this hilltop phenomenon in the Ebro, Guadalquivir and Tagus basins should be related to a stronger urban presence and role in these areas, potentially signifying that the landscape was controlled by these towns here. The exception to this trajectory is the Basque Country area, which lacked much urban development, and which saw no clear emergence of fortresses or other kinds of fortified hilltop site in the landscape in this period (Quirós Castillo 2009; 2011a, 303–304). Currently, the only known proposed case in the territory is at Buradón (named in the 7th century as *castellum Bilibium*), set in a peripheral position of the Álava plain, closer to the Ebro Valley, and comprising a hilltop site, associated with a church, occupied from the 5th/6th

century (Cepeda *et al.* 1997). However, it is noticeable that the church is located at the foot of the cliff and close to the Ebro River border, while the hilltop site is a very small place – previously occupied in the Final Bronze Age – with little space for houses. The main settlement of the 5th century, indeed, seemingly lay close to the church and an associated necropolis (Ariño Gil 2013, 115). In any case, as seen before, a *castellum* is not necessarily a fortress (Carrié 2013, 24–25).

As well as the unquestioned military and possible aristocratic imprint in these settlements, recent investigations have helped also reveal something of these sites' productive character, which is chiefly agrarian, as shown through finds such as agricultural tools and silos, plus industrial activities, such as evident from an ironworking furnace found in El Castillón (Sastre and Catalán 2012). One good example of this comes at the *castellum* of Puig Rom, a settlement of clear defensive character, but whose population was strongly agrarian, since the archaeological data document a good number of agricultural tools, cooking pots and *amphorae,* some imported. The ceramics found here, as is true for most hilltop sites, show a high level of variety in the products used – something not evident in the noted villages and hamlets, and which therefore supports the view of social differentiation in the hilltop seats and hints at a possible elite presence. In this regard we can also observe how domestic structures on (many of) the hilltop settlements (*e.g.* Puig Rom, Cerro del Castillo (Bernardos, Segovia), Cabeza de Navasangil, El Castillón, El Cristo de San Esteban, etc.), although not of high quality, were built in stone, in contrast to the timber and clay technology generally employed in lowland villages and farmsteads.

We can distinguish two main types of hilltop occupation: firstly, those hilltop sites built *ex novo*, without any known prior occupation, as occurs at the two cited locations of Cerro del Castillo and Cabeza de Navasangil, at which widely there was a certain degree of complexity in the defensive articulation, with an enclosure formed by two walls and a rubble-and-soil fill, and usually also with defensive towers or bastions; and, secondly, those that marked a 5th- or 6th-century reuse or recolonisation of ancient sites, such as Iron Age hilltop settlements in the Lusitanian Paiva region (Vieira 2004) and in diverse parts of *Gallaecia* (Sánchez Pardo 2012; 2013). Why these two types? Perhaps the latter were sites never completely forgotten about and fitted the natural communication lines of an area; the former, new sites, by contrast, perhaps responded to different needs, based on military or economic factors. We should also bear in mind the possibility that some of these sites were initially temporary refuges that became more

permanent, or else sites that were only used periodically. However, the archaeology may struggle to clarify such roots.

Arguably, the abundance of the 'hilltop phenomenon' in the north-west of the Peninsula, an area assigned to the Suevic Kingdom and its border zone with the Visigoths, can probably be associated with the needs of control and defence. If so, the problem lies in understanding who controlled them, because, although in theory the Suevic-Visigothic border was quite stable from the second half of the 5th century until the end of the Suevic Kingdom in AD 585, it is difficult to pinpoint securely any related bastions or other defensive structures. It has been proposed that this *limes* comprised more a network of towns like Visigothic *Salamantica* and Suevic Idanha and, as secondary centres, *castra* and *castella*, which could have been formed by these hilltop sites. Thanks to their geographic position, it seems that the defended hilltop sites of Castro Ventosa, ancient *Castro Bergidum*, El Castillón and Cristo de San Esteban were part of the Suevic Kingdom, while Cerro del Castillo and Cabeza de Navasangil were Visigothic (Ariño Gil and Diaz Martinez 2014). Here the resources to construct defences at sites that had some control over routeways might be seen as a sign of a 'state' role in initiating the hilltop sites.

In the south-eastern area, and specifically in the border zone between the Visigothic Kingdom and the Byzantine *Prouincia Spania*, we can identify this same kind of occupation, although here *urbes* and *civitates* were the core of the settlement pattern, with a much less dense or articulated network of hilltop sites. Strikingly, in eastern *Baetica*, a number of *civitates*, including *Sexi* (Almuñecar) and *Salambina* (Salobreña), disappeared in the 5th to 6th centuries, at the same basic time that occupation of some hilltops close to these failed urban sites commences (Gomez Becerra 1998, 466–470); there was also a fairly dense pattern in eastern Andalusia from the 5th century. In contrast, defended hilltop usage was scarce in the territory's western area, since here the concentration of urban centres endured and continued to control the region into the Early Middle Ages (Román Punzón and Martín Civantos 2014, 76).

However, historical sources, notably the 8th-century Lombard/Italian scholar Paul the Deacon (*Hist. Lang.* III, 21) and, much more local, the 7th-century Isidore of Seville (*Hist. Goth*. 49), do mention this south-eastern frontier and cite a network of Byzantine *castra*. Some of these *castra* may well signify the defended towns, whereas others may be hilltop locations, such as the noted *Begastri* and Tolmo de Minateda, which both lay in Byzantine hands until their annexation by the Visigoths; this should be true for other hilltop sites, such as

Cerro de la Almagra, and *civitates* like *Baria*, *Urci* and *Basti* (Abad Casal *et al.* 2008). Together with the mountains and other geographical features that were crucial defining components in this frontier, we can include the hilltop fortifications of Salto de la Novia (Ulea, Murcia), Cerro de San Miguel (Orihuela, Murcia) and the Cerro de Montroy (Villaricos, Almería) (Gutiérrez Lloret 1999, 113–114; Ramallo Asensio and Vizcaíno 2002), while the opposing Visigothic defence system will have featured its own network of fortifications, such as those documented in the Valencia region at Valencia la Vella, la Senda de l'Horteta and Punt de Cid (Jiménez *et al.* 2014).

Beyond these *limes* areas, in other peninsular regions, we can recognise other instances of hilltop settlement and use. In La Rioja a set of such sites is evident from the 7th century, with a claimed exclusively military occupation; these can likely be related to the Visigothic state's strategic control of access lines into the interior of the Peninsula, and increased attention over communication routes and trade traffic between La Meseta and the northern areas (Tejado Sebastián 2011; 2014).

In the Catalan area, apart from Puig Rom, other interesting defensive components in the landscape are the *clausurae* ('barriers') guarding the passage of Pertús, thought to have been active between the mid-4th century and the first decades of the 6th. The sites of Clusa Alta and Castell del Moros were two compact military *castella* in the *clausurae*, fundamental to the defence and control of the ancient *Via Augusta* and this territory of contact in the Pyrenees (Nolla Brufau 2015, 46–48). Similarly, we can cite the *castellum* of San Julià de Ramis, which helped protect *Gerunda* until its abandonment in the mid-8th century. This was a late Iron Age Iberian hilltop site, sporadically inhabited still during Roman times, but reoccupied more formally in the mid-4th century as a strategic and military settlement, with a larger and more coherent or organised plan than the smaller and simple bastions of the *clausurae*. During the Visigothic period, a chapel was built in the central area of the old *oppidum*; interestingly, the cult structure endured beyond the end of military activity, remaining as a parish centre until it was replaced in *c*. AD 1000, by the current church (Burch *et al.* 2006, 63–76).

Economic developments in the rural sphere

How, then, do we reconstruct the economic and social articulation of these changed landscapes of the Hispanic Peninsula from Late Antiquity? Firstly, we can highlight that the differences between the archaeological materials recovered in the urban centres and the

hilltop sites compared with other rural settlements, whether villages, hamlets or farms, reveal, as noted, a clear divergence in the economy and in the standards of living of these contexts. However, this does not mean that these lesser rural settlements lay outside of the main economic system (if we can use the term 'system'), because it is important to bear in mind that peasants in these more functional rural sites presumably also paid taxes and rents (likely paid 'in kind' as opposed to with money), interacted in a wider social context or orbit and became part of an economy and trade model.

We can anticipate that the peasants contributed to the system through working the land, raising and trading livestock and, although they were out of the trade circuits of luxury or high-status materials and other elements of prestige, they continued as the core providers of the food supply for all the society. As a consequence, it is difficult to think only of a self-sufficient economy, because they continued to provide for the cities, towns and probably also the hilltop sites, but with different intermediaries and trade relations. The growing autonomy of the countryside and the strong power of the proprietary elite created a new kind of dialogue with the central power places.

In this sense, our current state of knowledge permits us to propose that these post-classical villages and hamlets were included in working networks, in many cases articulated through the river systems, with a population density that depended on the productivity and sustainability of the lands. For example, in the well-studied area of the Madrid region, the distance between these small communities varied between 4 and 9 km, but they were more closely set in the richer plains of the River Jarama and the Culebro (Vigil-Escalera 2006). By contrast, in *Gallaecia*, whose landscapes reveal a tendency more towards a polynuclear settlement structure, such small-scale communities lay more distant from one another (Sánchez Pardo and Rodríguez Resino 2009, 141–145).

Arguably, in terms of social control and articulation, we can suggest that these 'networks' were geared chiefly to agricultural management, with the aristocratic elite – based either in hilltop sites or in towns – acting as chief 'observers' or 'overseers' of the process, and benefiting from any accumulated surplus. Productive strategies of the process are not always fully clear, but in some cases specialisation activities are found in some villages and hamlets through the evidence of pottery kilns, olive presses and animal husbandry practices.

It is difficult to determine how much was being produced in these places and whether the workers were generating a large surplus for external supply, although, as noted, it seems certain that the villages

were the main suppliers of the urban centres and other central places (defended hilltop sites, perhaps also monasteries) in the territory. Relationships (regular?) with these bigger markets can be documented via the movements of imported ceramics, glassware and metals, although, as noted, the range of objects at the villages is poorer and less varied than in the hilltop settlements. Closer analysis of the materials will in the future help document the internal mechanics of contact and production and exchange. One interesting idea is that of intermittent ceramic workshops – only related with sub-regional distribution – and the activity of itinerant craftsmen, perhaps sponsored by local and regional elites (see Quirós Castillo 2011a). An aspect to highlight is also the lack of coin finds in the villages, suggesting that there was no evident monetary economic market in operation.

However, it is important to stress that imported ceramics, from the North African and eastern Mediterranean areas, that are known in other Hispanic territories, were wholly absent in the Duero Valley from the 6th century onwards (Quirós Castillo 2011a, 298) and occurred in very low quantities in other interior areas. In fact, one could argue that these imports only reached the coastal areas, and especially urban centres on these (not only in the Visigothic, but also in Byzantine and Suevic territories), although they did see some movement to significant inland foci, such as the capitals of *Toletum*, *Reccopolis*, Tolmo de Minateda and *Begastri* (C. E. V. P. P. 1991; Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007, 601). This situation connects with the fact that there were no real 'commercial frontiers' related to political boundaries in this epoch, and it is more accurate to think of geographical issues being more of a determinant for the dynamics of territories. A clear symptom of this assessment is that, after the 470s, when the coastal area of *Tarraconensis* was taken by the Visigoths, such imports continued to arrive (Járrega Domínguez 2000; 2013; Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007, 599–601), persisting through well into 7th century (but with a cessation likely linked to the Islamic conquest of Carthage in 698).

Ceramics are not the sole useful index fossil for observing evolving economic activities in these territories. Within Suevic lands (i.e. not on its borders), the prominent use of hilltop settlements (examples include Viladonga, San Cibrián das Las and Santa Tecla), and their location almost always in valleys and in more fertile agrarian areas (Sánchez Pardo 2013, 153–154), likely relate to some type of control of the exploitation of the landscape. Furthermore, Sánchez Pardo (2014, 1001–1002) has argued that some were directly related to

overseeing or undertaking mining activity, as claimed for Penadominga (Quiroga, Lugo) and *Castellum Litoria* (Nogueira de Ramuín, Orense).

Detailed analyses of evidence of farming and husbandry show comparable reorganisations of strategies, based on diversification and non-specialised peasant communities. In the Duero basin, in fact, the exploitation of the landscape appears centred on livestock (Tejerizo García 2013); whereas in the centre of the Peninsula, palaeobiological studies indicate that there were favoured crops – especially wheat and barley – produced, and the resultant grain tended to be stored in private but also some communal silos. In addition, the primary livestock preference was sheep-goat and, to a lesser extent, cattle; the zooarchaeology also shows the presence of wild bird in the diet (Vigil-Escalera 2007, 272–273; Vigil-Escalera *et al.* 2014).

These data are almost always related with villages and hamlets, where, in many cases, the scarce archaeological record associated has favoured these kinds of analysis. However, it is difficult to see if these data are matched in hilltop sites, although we suppose that these were part of the main economic system. Indeed, at many hilltop sites we find also storage spaces for grain, probably for stockpiling the surpluses from adjacent territories. In fact, if we accept that these were central places in the land, which managed and organised the socio-economic resources, it is logical that these defended communities possessed storage spaces and other kinds of installations, such as metalworking furnaces, and had related specialist workers.

Interestingly, along the whole Cantabrian coast, and especially in areas linked with the Cantabrian range, we can see how the rural settlement pattern shows close connections with animal husbandry and transhumance practices (see Gutiérrez Gonzalez and Muñiz López 2004), typically at an altitude of between 1,200 and 1,300 m, close to watercourses and pasturage, as well as metal deposits (Fernández Mier 2009). Indeed, there is an argument that the well-attested use of caves as both habitats and shelters in this area probably relates to these shepherding movements and cattle raising. In Cataluña, these transhumance routes are documented in the mountainous areas, above all in the pre-Pyrenees, with some connection evident with monastic lands and with the location of the episcopal sees of *Ilerda* and *Vregllum* (Sales Carbonell and Salazar Ortiz 2013).[4]

While we should anticipate that most trade and economic exchange was local and regional, we must recognise longer-distance connections. As well as the noted imports that signify at least periodic Mediterranean traders at the Hispanic ports, evidence from a number

of cemeteries in the Basque Country, such as Aldaieta, reveals funerary goods – notably weaponry, dress fittings and personal adornments, dated mainly in the second half of the 6th century – that show 'Frankish' characteristics, perhaps pointing to an exchange network with nearby Aquitania (Azkarate Garai-Olaun 1996; 2004). These types of objects do not appear in other centres of power; however, the territorial distribution of such elements (from Cantabria to Navarra) could be the result of a system of commercial relations and may be an indication that the Frankish-Visigothic border was permeable to trade activity.

In general, as the ceramic record shows, most of the villages and hamlets we have discussed were not oriented simply to a self-sufficiency economy, but instead were included in a sub-regional productive culture, supplying urban centres and exchanging with other settlements in local and regional networks. More work needs to be done to model this image and to refine the idea of networks; it is argued, for example, that from the 6th century some territorial fragmentation was evident – maybe as a consequence of the new *gentes* settled and the resultant new local powers emerging, which were in continual dialogue with the monarchy and the State – making it difficult to think then in terms of wide commercial contacts, and instead viewing economic activities receding in most of the Peninsula to a short-range trade.

A disorganised and chaotic landscape? The new reality of the Hispanic rural context

I have argued that the arrival of the new *gentes* and their establishment in the Peninsula in and from the 5th century did not greatly alter the core property system or the main characteristic of agrarian exploitation. Large estates continued to be the principal elements of organisation in the landscape, in which the reutilisation of ancient *villae* and the development of farms, hamlets and villages, as well as hilltop sites, emerge as the diverse types of settlements populating and managing the lands and territories, for the most part assumed to be under the control of large landowners. Indeed, the real changes in the rural order in this period were those produced by the new model of rural settlement, which progressively took shape across the 5th and 6th centuries for all the noted typologies, generating a different configuration to the countryside and its populations. The main problem we face, however, is to understand the character and role of the leading and lesser landowners, and the complex

relationship between these varied types of settlement types and the rural churches and monasteries that also appeared in this period, plus the burial grounds and other economic structures.

When discussing the reutilisation of the *villae*, it is important to note that the agrarian activities that happened within their sites and grounds were mainly the same as those that had featured in the past. The main difference instead lies in the complete loss of aristocratic use and especially display that had characterised these often monumental spaces in the 4th century, mutated from the first half of the 5th century into more productive trends and with a type of domestic use far from the ancient Roman luxuries. This is certainly a notable concern of researchers: what happened to the aristocratic owners of these complexes? Did the instability and insecurity of the period, with warfare and the unquestionable tensions with the new population groups, plus a resized/reduced market and economy resulting from the break-up of Roman control in this and other provinces, force this rural elite to take up more secure (yet not very visible) residence in the defended towns and cities?

Nevertheless, if we consider that these *villae* had never been actual permanent residences of the Roman elite landowners, so we can also contemplate that these owners continued to exist, but were based now in the urban centres and were still able to manage their properties – as a source of revenues; the change is thus simply in terms of *villa* loss as leisure and display foci. In fact, Ariño Gil (2013) has suggested that the owners were the ones who promoted the new mode of peasant settlement over the *villae*, as might well be indicated by the fact that there seems to be little or no hiatus between one and the other occupation. Furthermore, the appearance of churches over the former *villae*, with associated necropoleis (though sometimes we lack a church, or the temporal relationship is not secure), could point to private initiatives from the aristocrats, using these churches as a public exhibition of their power. Another symptom of the ongoing presence or influence of the proprietors of the *fundus*, perhaps not as a physical presence, but as landlords, is the insertion or installation of agricultural facilities for speculative crops, such as wine and oil, clearly designed to generate a surplus and an income.

In the same context, and likewise morphology, the first *ex-novo* hamlets and villages start to appear. It is difficult for us as yet to prove if these were always related to larger estates or if they were independent communities, but if we accept that both scenarios could exist in the landscape, then a complex and challenging picture

emerges. Certainly, what stands out materially and physically in these sites is the uniform and poor level of the domestic spaces – comparable to what is found in the huts built over/at the old *villae* – and the near total lack of any strong social differentiation: can we not read in these facts that these new communities were – even if more or less autonomous – under the control of an aristocracy, which permitted no form of leadership? We might observe how the villages and hamlets that were created *ex novo* tended not to have churches – with the exception so far of the noted example of El Bovalar, but this, as noted above, has recently been reinterpreted as a monastic space – or any kind of fortification; like the small settlements that appeared over the old *villae*, these were undefended (the strong contrast being that both urban centres and the hilltop sites built or rebuilt their curtain walls in this period). This reality may suggest that the sense of insecurity was less dramatic than has generally long been supposed, and these fortified sites were directly related with the aristocracy and so form a clear sign of strength and authority.

The hilltop-site phenomenon is striking – one of the most characteristic features of this post-classical settlement pattern – as is the archaeological visibility in these sites of a more elevated economic level, such as in construction techniques (for defences and houses) and in material culture terms, such as pottery and in metals. These facts connect with the idea that these sites also could have marked the creation of power centres and fortified residences for new local elites (Castellanos and Martín Viso 2005; Gutiérrez González 2014). In fact, their role as central places in the territorial organisation seems to be clear, above all in areas in which a low density of urban centres prevailed; thus, while in the more urbanised Catalan area these military and strategic hilltop sites seem to predominate, in the Duero basin, which featured a notable rate of loss of urban centres, an elevated presence of inhabited hilltop sites with domestic and productive spaces reveals a high necessity or dependency on these for the articulation and control of the territory. It is true, however, that an absence of urban centres did not promote the rise of hilltop sites in the Basque Country area, and so, besides urban loss as a factor in the emergence of this upland process, other variables must have existed.

Certainly, what seems clear is that the hilltop sites appeared in geo-strategic positions, where a community sought to define and defend their lands. Nevertheless, the relationship of these elevated communities with other rural sites, namely villages and hamlets, and with large estates remains to be fully assessed. Indeed, Martín Viso (2006a) defines these as ‘islands of authority’ in the new territorial

hierarchy: together with the urban centres, these were cells of local power. We should assume that some of the landowners were part of the old Hispano-Roman aristocracy, but many others were part of the new order of Suevic and Visigothic elites (or a mix of the two, as discussed above).

As said, the real problem is the invisibility of these *possessores* in the archaeological record, despite the fact that texts mention these and tell us how some administered their own militia and oversaw justice and gathered taxes. We may assume that rents were directly dispatched to the landowners, who, using intermediaries in their several properties, organised the collection of taxes. Archaeologically, we must look to the diverse economic data – silos, kilns, animal bones – to try and build a coherent material picture of these operations.

The growing importance of the relations between these landowners and the state was proportionate to the decrease of the centralisation in power of the Visigothic Kingdom. Furthermore, as will be seen in following chapters, the role of Christianity and the competition between rural churches and the control of the urban dioceses further helped in the rise of autonomy in the countryside. Evidently, therefore, there was an alteration in the relationships between the *territoria* and the State, and this eventually caused a new, independent situation, out of the cities' control. That does not mean that the countryside completely lost or cut relations with the urban centres, because the villagers and farmers of course continued to be the main suppliers of food to urban markets. Nevertheless, the growing autonomy of the rural sphere was unstoppable, heading towards something akin to the feudal system, finally confirmed during the Middle Ages.

Notes

1 For fuller consideration of the changing essence of the State during the Visigothic period and its new organisation, see Chapter 2, on the relevant figures in this transformation, see Chapter 5, pp. 82–88.

2 On the Christianisation of rural areas and the growing role of the Church in the organisation and exploitation of the countryside, see Chapter 6, pp. 115–121.

3 For further details about Parpalinas, please see Chapter 5, pp. 83–84.

4 On rural monasticism and its organisation and exploitation of the countryside, see Chapter 6, pp. 121–127.

Part III

Peopling the landscape

Chapter 5

Identifying post-classical populations in the archaeological record

Introduction

It will be evident that the data so far explored have focused our attention on the materiality of change and the functional implications in both town and country, but without directly addressing the presence or absence of people in the archaeological record. The vast majority of current studies in fact suffer from the failure to consider who are the agencies of this process; while scholars are familiar with ideas such as the abandonment, robbing and/or the reoccupation of public spaces, modified roles for former buildings and the emergence of villages, only in a few (still rare) cases has there been close and explicit engagement with the intentionality or agency of individuals, groups or communities in these processes.

Exploring the roles of human actors in promoting changes can certainly be complicated because, in a majority of cases, the extant written sources are often too scarce to offer any reliable and detailed image of the agents behind the diverse transformations attested in Late Antiquity. For example, it is very easy to simply claim the 'Church' or a 'bishop' as a key promoter, while other changes are just by 'people'. The aristocracy (civil and military) do, of course, make appearances in the texts, but such elites are admittedly harder to trace in the archaeological record, except through rich burials (sometimes within churches), occasional town houses or, later, manor complexes; archaeology, whether excavation or landscape survey, tends instead to trace more 'ordinary' and generic people in our study period, with many difficulties in distinguishing between classes within these and in identifying these in the historical sources, which traditionally were ignored. Even when we might assign a church foundation to a specific bishop, this obscures the fact that there were architects, craftsmen,

artists, labourers, supplies and so on, all equally engaged in this project, and yet these figures are all anonymous.

Investigating the interactions between people and spaces and structures is thus the main objective of this chapter, hoping to unravel the relationship between population and territory, the main characteristics of social change across our study period and the levels of negotiation between local communities and power groups, and the nature of these 'powers'.

The written sources: seeking the elite in the rural and urban contexts

During the last decades of the Western Roman Empire, the presence of a proper high Roman aristocracy in Spain is a known fact, attested strongly through both their documented presence within or association with the imperial family of Theodosius (himself of Hispanic origins). Two such names are Didymus and Verinianus, who are both reported as having mustered armies of peasants and slaves (*serui* and *rustici*) in the *Lusitania* province in order to counter usurpers to the imperial throne between 408 and 409.[1] Other wealthy landowners are similarly recorded as gathering up private armies, often to defend their own estates in the 5th-century against *bagaudae* or even barbarians. It seems evident that this powerful aristocracy was characterised by a remarkable independence (when required), above all in the inland regions (Wickham 2005, 203–232).

However, although relatively little time passed from the lavish *villae* of this late Roman aristocracy – with their fine mosaics, architectural decor and luxurious portable possessions – to the (documented) great Visigothic landowners, apart from the noted cases of Pla de Nadal and the probable example of Algezares, archaeologically we do struggle to trace any definite constructions of aristocratic seats in the rural context to help show how these new, post-Roman *nobiles* lived and where they established their principal residences and retreats.

But we are fortunate to have one very notable excavated site, Parpalinas, which, although not an *ex-novo* early medieval construction, features a rich *domus* that spans the 4th to 7th centuries (Espinosa Ruiz 2003, 79–109; 2011, 181–187). Across that period Parpalinas formed the active centre of a territorial domain located between *Calagurris* and *Vareia* (today under the quarter of Varea in Logroño, La Rioja), maintaining its model of settlement as a *villa*, with its residential *pars urbana* – with *impluvium*, *atrium* and *tablinum* – and

an industrial area, dedicated both to wine production and to the production of construction materials (*lateres*, *tegulae*, *imbrices*), as well as pottery in a *figlina*. It is probable that this *domus* replaced an older and more modest mid-imperial structure, as suggested by the presence of some ceramics from the 2nd century. The new, elite complex (endowed with a heating system, piped water, rooms decorated with polychrome paintings, and window glass) is dated by ceramics and a collection of 25 bronze coins, mainly issues from the sons of Constantine (between AD 340 and 350) – a chronology in line with the majority of high-status *villae* in the Ebro and Duero valleys. Roughly 200 m south of the main *domus* a burial ground and two churches have been excavated: the first or upper basilica features a horseshoe-shaped apse and a nave of 23.5 × 10.2 m, but it is problematic to date, except to a broad pre-Islamic phase; however, this overlay a second, earlier church of smaller dimensions, which is assumed to mark a Christianisation of the Parpalinas complex between the 5th and 6th centuries AD (Espinosa Ruiz 2006b). Burials within and outside of each of these churches have a first-phase chronology belonging to the 6th and 7th centuries and a second phase of the 12th and 13th centuries – this latter group clearly coming after the horseshoe-apsed church had fallen into ruins, with some burials even cutting into destruction levels; there might, however, also be some burials coincident with the upper, more recent church.

Apart from the continuity of activity at this *villa* – if with a persistence more in the way of productive activity and then of religious space, but not of the residential space – the importance of this site, as said before, comes from the likely direct connection with a 6th-century saint's life, the *Vita Sancti Aemiliani*, written by Braulio, bishop of Zaragoza. Emilianus (now known as San Millán) was a hermit who died in 574, with Braulio publishing the *Vita c.* 65 years later (although it has been claimed that he drafted the text many years before, having collated the direct accounts of various of the disciples of San Millán; see Vázquez de Parga 1943). The hermit/saint Emilianus made several visits from his oratory of Suso, including to Parpalinas (*Parpalines* in the *Vita*), made at the request of the rich landowner (called a *senator*) Honorius, whose house there was apparently possessed by a demon (*VSA*. XVII, 24). Arriving in Parpalinas, he gathered up the local priests, and, according to the canonical ritual, he exorcised the demons from Honorius' residence (*domus Honori senatoris*). As well as the religious details offered, what it stands out here is the presence in the 6th century of a family of *potentiores* in this part of the Upper Ebro Valley, with the owner

seemingly with a significant local leadership role and in close connection with the Church (Castellanos 1998).

In fact, we are told that Emilianus performed further exorcism ceremonies for other wealthy or high-status people, such as the *senatores* Nepotianus and Proseria (*VSA*. XV, 22), a girl called Columba, daughter of the *curialis* Maximus (*VSA*. XVI, 23) and a *servus* of the count (*comes*) Eugenius – we do not know where they were based, but we can suppose that the sphere of action of Emilanius was centred on the Cantabrian fringe, especially in its southern areas (*VSA*. XIV, 21). The lexicon/terminology here complicates the situation somewhat, because, in the 6th century the term *senator* probably simply denoted an important figure in society, someone prominent in terms of the possession of land (see Escalona Monge and Rodríguez Cerezo 1988). References to *curiales* and *comites* merely confirm that there were notable or distinct groups of people with administrative responsibilities, relevant socio-economic and perhaps military roles.

The letters of Braulio (*Ep*. XV, XVI, XIX, XX, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXIV) are an excellent window for studying some of the activities of the larger landowners of the Ebro Valley during the 7th century (Castellanos 1996); we hear of estates able to generate diverse products (for example, Honorius, as thanks, sent to the *oratorium* of San Millán carts laden with delicacies) and of estate workers. But it is impossible to know the type and scale of surpluses generated, and what markets were sought, whether urban or simply among other elites. Likewise, we gain few clues about the labour forces on these lands, these appearing as a heterogeneous group often with the label *servi*, although these probably were not just 'slaves' in the classical Roman sense, but comprised also dependant peasants. Indeed, the so-called *Fórmulas Visigodas*, a group of 46 laws (mostly private rules), compiled by the first half of the 7th century and known thanks to a 16th-century copy, cite cases of peasants who, due to the deterioration of their economic situation, came to work as dependants of a *dominus* (*Form*. XXXII), working on his land and paying *modius* and *decimas*, benefits of use and *exenia* (García Moreno 1992; Castellanos 1996). However, we should certainly add to the mix also groups of free landowners, holding small farms and plots of land.

The ownership of the landed property was the basis of the power of these aristocracies – *senatores*, *honorati*, *comites* and so on – although it is important to note that we are referring not to *latifundium*, that is, huge landed estates which were prominent under Rome, but in most cases probably collections of more compact plots of land. An important pair of guides in this regard are the donation and the will or

testamentum of Vicente of *Asán*, dating to AD 551 and 576 respectively. These texts provide a window into the spread of properties of a rich – here an ecclesiastical – landowner, '*in terra Terratonensi, in terra Barbotano, in terra Labitolosani, in terra Boletano, in terra Hilardensi e in terra Caesaraugustana*' (see Ariño Gil and Díaz Martínez 2003). The majority of these plots or small estates were concentrated in the Pyrenean area of Huesca, in the La Fueva and Boltaña valleys (the ancient *terrae terrantonensis* and *boletana*), the Esera and Cinca valleys, with properties in the territories of *Barbotum* and *Labitolosa*, but also included estates in the territories of the cities of *Ilerda* and *Caesaraugusta.* This broad spread shows an interesting diversity in likely resources and products – lowland and upland spaces, with cattle raising and agriculture probably the main activities.

The general silence of the historical sources changes following King Leovigild's unification of (much of) the peninsula in the 570s, when new Visigothic legislation indicates that the *nobiles* – the largest landowners, both secular and clerical – held important properties. In this context, patronage relationships were established, in which *honestiores* established a dependence and loyalty bond or nexus that, in many cases, did not distinguish between free and non-free people. This, in fact, was the great difference with the late Roman *dominus*, who had a contractual relationship with his *coloni* but never one of personal dependence. These patronage relationships were evident already in the period of King Euric (466–484), as seen in his codex – and improved later under Leovigild (*LV.* V, 3, and 4) – in which Roman law was connected with the Germanic tradition of a warrior leader and the allegiance/subjection of freemen who had personal links with him (Díaz Martínez 2007, 463–469). In the noted donation and will of Vicente of *Asán*, three categories of dependants are referenced: *coloni*, *servi* and *liberti*, in which the term *coloni* was probably an archaism, borrowed or inherited from late Roman *formulae* and not a real class.[2] Slaves and freedmen were the basis of production under the Visigoths. References to slaves are in fact a constant feature in the laws of the *Liber Iudiciorum*, dated between 567 and 700, with almost half of the clauses referring to them. The importance and quantity of freedmen grew significantly throughout the Visigothic period, these having a special legal status (*LV.* VI, 4, 3; VIII, 4, 16);[3] in some way, they resemble late Roman *coloni*, working the land of their former owners and paying a rent (Díaz Martínez 2007, 476–479).

A dispersed array of lands, but under the control of the same owner

(such as attested in the donation of Vicente), was a common mode of property possession in the Visigothic period. But a large property was not necessarily synonymous with concentrated exploitation. In fact, using the evidence of the cited nobleman Theodemir and his pact (also known as Treaty of Orihuela)[4] with ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ibn Mūsā (son of Mūsā bin Nusair, governor of North Africa), we can observe how, in early 8th-century south-eastern Spain, a *possessor* could hold several estates in diverse areas within the Levante zone. This territory, which had not been subdued by military conquest, but which saw an agreed capitulation in AD 713 (Chalmeta 1975; Gutiérrez Lloret 2013), included an important number of Visigothic urban seats, such as *Aurariola* (Orihuela), *Lucentum* (Alicante), *Eliocroca* (Lorca), Mula,[5] *Elotana* (Hellín or Elda), *Bigastrum* (Cehegín) and *Ilici* (Elche). In exchange for his surrender, this Treaty of Orihuela recognised for Theodemir, who was probably a regional *comes* or a *dux* in the reign of King Witiza (700–710/711), his ongoing ownership of his properties, a continuity in the government of his territory and respect for the Christian population’s lives and their families, properties and religious worship. These people were nonetheless required to pay a personal tax in money (*yizia*) and a territorial one in kind (*jaray*), and had to promise never to join or conspire with the enemies of the Muslims (Barceló Perelló 1979, 236–240; Manzano Moreno 1998). If the pact was respected, so the situation of the Visigothic noblemen in the region seemingly remained unchanged and relatively secure; indeed, Theodemir seems to have been able to pass onto Athanagil (presumably his son)[6] his territorial role and the agreement.

The significance of the figure of Theodemir is evident in the fact that his name – associated with a rural domain somewhere in this area – came to designate an al-Andalusian administrative demarcation (*kūra*), which comprised the current provinces of Murcia (a city founded in 825, which would become the main capital of this territory), south of Alicante, south-east of Albacete and north of Almeria, under the name of the *Kūra* of *Tudmīr*. (On the political divisions of the Iberian peninsula in this period, see Vallvé Bermejo 1986; Manzano Moreno 2006, 425; specifically, about this *Kūra,* Gutiérrez Lloret 1996; 2013.)

This is one of the few pacts preserved between the Islamic conquerors and the Visigothic aristocracy, and it reveals an interesting independence of the territorial elites with regard to the Visigothic State, which had already been made subject by when the pact was signed (Acién Almansa 1994, 111). The listing of seven cities in the text shows that those were the central places of the fiscal authority of

Theodemir and implies that it was in the interest of the Muslim authorities here to adapt the late Roman–Visigothic municipal structure to their financial interests.

Figure 12. Emerita*: city walls with reinforcements in ashlar blocks (image courtesy of M. Alba Calzado).*

Indeed, even with the upheavals of the decay of the Roman West and the settlement of barbarians, cities retained a decisive role in terms of political, cultural and economic functions during the Visigothic Kingdom, although it has been suggested that the Visigothic administration was not always urban-based. Some of the most powerful ones, as *Emerita* (Fig. 12) and *Corduba*, maintained a certain level of independence, thanks to their economic self-sufficiency and defensive capacity (Díaz Martínez 2007, 487–488).

Urban prominence in administration and politics is almost always evident in the historical sources, which highlight especially the figure of bishops and (although much less well documented) state officials such as the *comes ciuitatis* – who was responsible of the tax collection and the administration of justice – and sometimes also of the existence of a secular aristocracy. In fact, a lost epigraph, mentioned above, commemorated the Gothic *dux* Salla and the bishop Zeno, and their restoration in the late 5th century of the town walls and the bridge over the Guadiana River (Camacho 1986, 239; Alba Calzado 1998, 364). Two centuries later, in the mid-7th century, the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* references how, a century before, two unnamed local aristocrats – a nobleman of senatorial origin/status and his wife – had donated all of their properties to bishop Paul, first, and then to his successor in office, Fidelis, making this church the richest in the Iberian peninsula.[7]

The next bishop, Masona (570–610) was the founder here of a *xenodochium*, a hostel for pilgrims, travellers and ill people, by the late 6th century (*Vitas*, V. III, 13). Thanks to the *Vitas*, we are told that the palace of the *dux* Claudio lay close to the episcopal complex (*Vitas*, V. X, 30–35). This *dux* was probably a Visigothic commander, head of the troops stationed in the western zone of the province, whose main garrison was based in *Emerita* (García Moreno 1982, 235).

Of course, *Emerita* was no ordinary city, since it was capital of the *Diocesis Hispaniarum* in the late Roman period and it probably continued as one of the most influential cities during Visigothic rule, as is apparent from the *Vitas* and also by the holding of the Church Council here in AD 666, from which we can recognise something of how the properties of this dioceses were organised and managed from the urban centre. The bishop (or city Church), as a consequence, was a large landowner, but one largely resident in the city – as probably were many of the secular landholders.

The role of the bishop as 'builder' (Picard 1991) is very much evident in the case of the city of Valencia, where, between 530 and 550, one Justinian monumentalised the episcopal complex which was first activated in the late 5th century (Ribera i Lacomba 2008). Bishop Justinian is documented in scattered sources, but we owe much to his epitaph,[8] where it is emphasised that, when taking charge of the see, he had the task of restoring ancient churches and building new ones (Linage 1972).[9] The example of the Arian Bishop Ugnas in Barcelona is similar, as he held his position even after his conversion to Catholicism at the III Council of Toledo in 589, and was central to the expansion and monumentalisation of the city's episcopal group (Beltrán de Heredia 2008).

Thanks to the minutes of various Church Councils we know many names of the bishops of these centuries, and sometimes additional information about them is preserved that helps to create a picture of their main activities and inputs in urban contexts, although most of that evidence is centred on the ecclesiastic orbit. Indeed, the data regarding the figure of the *comes ciuitates* are less solid/precise, and we struggle to fully appreciate their role and vitality, even though this official appears in Visigothic law very early on, already under King Euric. Apart from their judicial and the payment collector activities, they were probably also in charge of the military functions, because in this period soldiers were often housed in cities (Díaz Martínez 2007, 447). As the next section hopes to show, we can now draw more on archaeology for additional information about these urban 'leads', especially in terms of their residences.

People in the urban context: the archaeological data

The continuity of many urban centres under the Visigoths is not doubted, and is sustained by the fact that the Islamic invaders had towns and cities as their primary military objective in the early 8th century (Gutiérrez Lloret 1998). These centres retained a crucial role in the administrative, religious and economic sphere, although we have observed already how their economic functions suffered a marked deterioration related to a loss of the role of cities as central places in their territories and in the management functions of the rural production.

The symbolic and ideological significance of the urban centres does not, however, always find a tangible reflection in the archaeological record. For the moment, apart from the foundation of *Reccopolis* and the Vega Baja in *Toletum*,[10] wider urban building works were related to Christian edifices and the (re)construction of defensive circuits, and we generally lack adequate information about other works and about the people who undertook these activities (except for the bishops). Many questions arise: who were the secular groups and what was the make-up of these and the lower classes? Did towns have a limited number of nobility? How did they express their presence? Were there differences in space between the poor and well-to-do in most towns? It is striking that the ancient written sources are virtually silent about the less favoured classes, even though they obviously comprised the majority in the urban population. The occupants of these townscapes were without doubt crucial to many of the transformations that occurred in cities from the late Roman period onwards. The increased use of timber for domestic units, the reoccupation of decayed ancient public monuments for housing or small-scale industry, and the appearance of dark earth deposits all point to what is often termed a 'ruralisation' of the townscapes (Christie 2016), and, equally, of the urban population. The townsfolk needed/were forced to interact with towns featuring diverse and perhaps numerous ruins, and to forge a new scenario which had no need for the large public structures that had so dominated the classical towns. The picture that archaeology paints – but a picture that still lacks good detail or definition – is of functioning streets, domestic and industrial spaces, rubbish deposits, and of churches as new foci; we gain more an image, therefore, of workers and worshippers, and see little of the civic 'authorities' who must have still made decisions.

Housing should normally form a good expression or reflection of the socioeconomic status of their occupants, and in our period the

indications are of a depressed economy. Apart from a few exceptions of houses built in former ancient public spaces,[11] some of them potentially related with a middle- or higher-ranking owner, the vast majority seem to be related with lower classes, with poor-quality construction elements and timber elevations; such housing occurs both in the reused public buildings/spaces, and generally across the townscapes, even close to some of the known Christian basilicas and presumed civic structures (which is where we might assume the elite resided). Such domestic spaces are compact, set with nearby rubbish dumps, possible work/industrial spaces, plus some small areas of cultivation and, sometimes, abandoned or open areas that might have seen penning of animals. We are yet to have studies that inform on such livestock or on the presence of pets such as dogs; more critically, more work is certainly needed to try and understand the types of people living in these houses.

As said, our knowledge about the secular buildings for the higher classes is not extensive in any way. Although we can suppose the existence in larger cities of residences (with reception spaces) for figures such as the *dux* and *comes ciuitatis*, only a few of these are so far known, found usually in topographic connection with core religious buildings, such as the palatine complex and basilica located in the upper terrace of *Reccopolis*.

The model of house with peristyle, a typical residence of the Roman elites, persisted in the 4th and 5th centuries, but almost wholly disappeared in the 6th century (Ellis 1988; Alba Calzado 2005b; Mar and Perich 2014), when a new form of domestic architecture emerged, in which the representation and reception spaces were no longer set on the ground floor, but organised as a large reception room on the first floor, whose existence is part indicated by the use of buttresses, such as seen in the episcopal palace of Tolmo de Minateda, dated to the 7th century, and that at Barcelona, built by the end of the 6th century (Bonnet and Beltrán de Heredia 2001, 86–87; Gutiérrez Lloret and Cánovas 2009, 95). This transformation in elite domestic spaces – in these last examples, of those of the religious elite – included more compact compositional schemes, in many cases bypassing the classical ‘Mediterranean’ open central space form and approaching more medieval-style residences, which concomitantly must signify changing mentalities and modes of social interaction (Fig. 13).

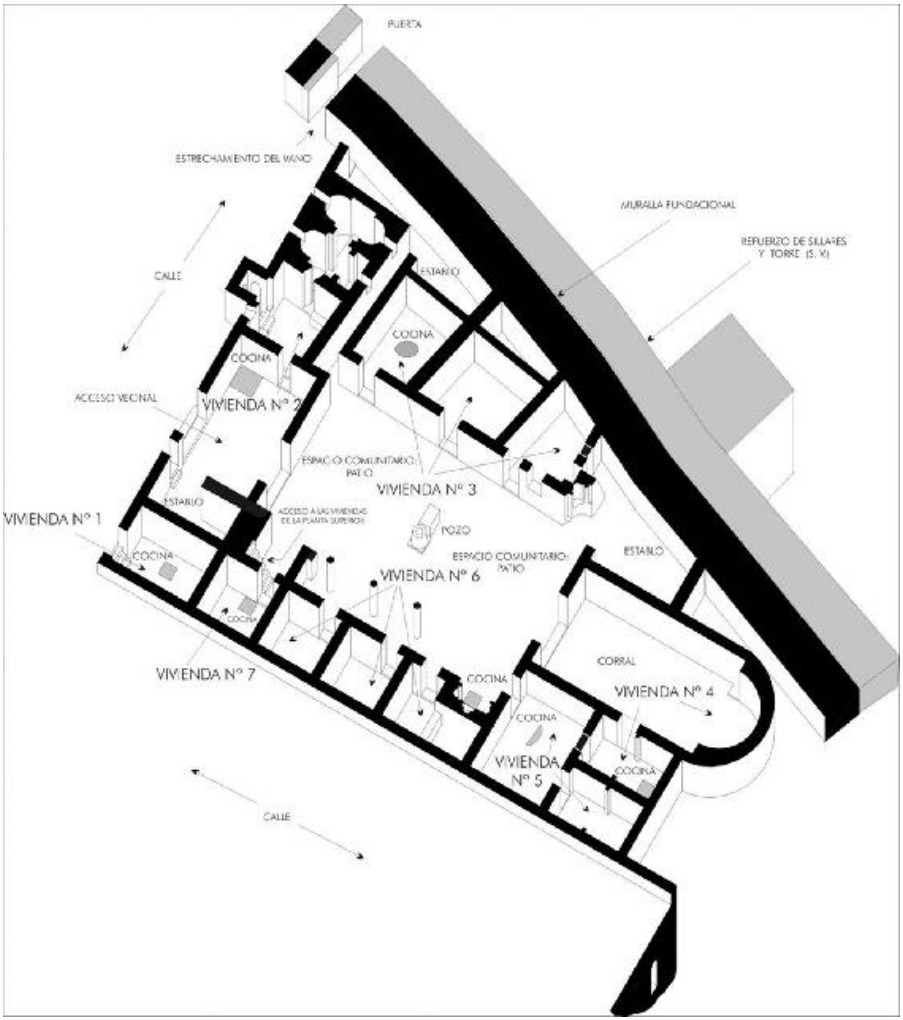

Figure 13. Emerita*: a Roman house divided into seven domestic units during the Visigothic period (image courtesy of M. Alba Calzado).*

This style of architecture is evident in the few known cases of palaces for a *comes ciuitatis*, such as at *Gerunda.* The area of the old *forum* in the north of the city first saw transformations from the 3rd–4th centuries. By the 6th, the construction of a large rectangular building in the western part of the square, occupying the entire western sector of the *Kardo Maximus* and thereby controlling one of the main access lines into the city, exploited some buildings of the former *forum*, such as the basilica, and utilised some *spolia* in its two-storey construction (Nolla Brufau *et al.* 2009, 180–182). The location, the architectural form and materials and the chronology tempt us to recognise this as the residence of the *comes ciuitatis*.

In the case of ancient Barcelona, the city's power centre brought

together the primary ecclesiastical buildings and those related to political-administrative/city government functions, which included the residence of the *comes ciuitatis*, as traced in excavation. The comital building, with a 'U' shape and presumably with two floors, was sited between the episcopal palace and the cruciform church, but was completely independent of these (Beltrán de Heredia 2008). There is a notable continuity of the functions of this building, albeit with some modifications, into the Middle Ages: first, it was converted into a Carolingian comital palace and, in the 12th century, into a new palace for the Crown of Aragon, following the union of the Kingdom of Aragon and the County of Barcelona (Beltrán de Heredia 2005).

These architectural models can be extended, as seen, to the *palatia* of the Visigothic and Suevic monarchy, evident at *Reccopolis* and Falperra respectively. The latter, located close to Braga, was built between the 5th and 6th centuries and was composed of a basilica and the royal courtly residence, which had a rectangular plan, with central pillars or piers and external buttresses (Real 2000). In *Reccopolis*, the so-called royal palace (133 m long) had its ground floor devoted to primarily practical roles, while the first floor was dedicated to reception and representation roles, as hinted at through residual traces of refined decorative materials (Olmo-Enciso 2008).

In both cases, the intimate relationship between religious and civil activities, with the palatine complex and the basilica, and in *Barcino* with the count's residence and the episcopal group, signifies a clear dialogue between bishop, *dux* and *comes ciuitates* that surely reflects the administrative oversight of this and other cities. However, the attested growth of episcopal civil power, along with judiciary and fiscal functions, in time overlapped with the duties of the *comes*, and one might argue that the fact that Christian buildings come to dominate in the townscape reflects how the bishop ultimately took the core urban lead.

Indeed, the bishop appears omnipresent in most social activities, dealing with the higher to the lower classes and also in direct communication with the monarch, who had the prerogative of the consecration of the bishops. In fact, at the II Council of Barcelona, in AD 599, it was noted that there were two ways to designate a bishop: by popular and episcopal acclamation and by royal appointment. Bishops were the new form of local urban power and regional authority – controlling also the churches and monasteries in the countryside – and also overseeing care and charity for the poor and needy – the latter role implying an economically strained, depleted society (Arce 2011, 261–278). The *xenodochium* built in *Emerita* by

Masona is a good example of such: this building (combining both hospital and pilgrim hostel) lay *extramuros*, close to the St Eulalia basilica, and near to two monasteries, one for male monks and other for 'virgins',12 and a necropolis, thereby creating a Christian central core in the city's *suburbium* (Mateos Cruz 1995b; 2000).

The construction of a magnificent episcopal group was a highly visible route to reaffirm that power. In *Valentia*, Justinian, bishop between *c.* AD 530 and 550, clearly had a plan in his mind when he redefined this area of the ancient *forum* with the construction of the grand cathedral, a baptistery and a cruciform mausoleum; the *forum* portico was also turned into a strong wall, perhaps to create an enclosure or precinct to the episcopal group.

Before the 6th century, we know almost nothing about this bishopric, although the bulk of the Hispanic episcopal network was likely already formed by the end of the 4th century or the early 5th (García Moreno 1990). For Valencia, as seen before, excavations show that from the second half of the 5th century a group of graves was cut in the spot at which Vicente was martyred, namely the cell or *carcer* in which the saint had been imprisoned. A notable find here was a crystal bowl with several biblical episodes incised as decoration, such as the *traditio legis*, dated to *c.* AD 400 and probably a product of a workshop of Rome or Ostia.

However, the complex that we best understand is that built under bishop Justinian (Ribera i Lacomba 2008). The first phase was marked by a large cathedral that reused Roman architectural materials, and had foundations 2 m thick and an external polygonal apse (internally circular). In a second phase, perhaps mid-century, on either side of the apse, the baptistery and the mausoleum were built, both likewise exploiting Roman materials, and with a cruciform shape. The mausoleum was built for the relics of the martyr, which initially were located outside of the city, in the funerary area of Roqueta, and then transferred to this mausoleum (Saxer 1995); Justinian himself was later interred here. In fact, the skeleton in the central tomb, has been dated by C14 analysis to the mid-6th century and so has plausibly been identified with this bishop (Roselló Mesquida and Soriano 1998). No doubt various of the later bishops were buried here, close to him and to the saint. Indeed, around the martyrial sepulchre was organised the episcopal cemetery, a necropolis *ad sanctos*, in which relevant clerics or high-status worshippers and patrons were entombed – the closer to the saints, the more significant they were (in life and death, and in Heaven).

This cemetery, along with that in *Barcino*, is probably one of the

best known in the Iberian Peninsula, and enables us to observe a clear social stratification in the organisation of the graves. Unfortunately, however, unlike in rural contexts, these tombs rarely have grave goods, and so it is difficult to read much more into these cemeteries, to which can be added isolated graves and small groups of burials elsewhere in the urban space. It is often suggested that these scattered burials relate to socially excluded people, especially where the bodies are thrown into pits and/ or onto dumps, as attested in cases in *Barcino*, *Emerita* and *Valentia* (Azkarate Garai-Olaun 2002).

As well as the evidence of *Valentia*'s episcopal complex and of the details recorded on Justinian's epitaph (Corell and Grau 1995), we are told that the bishop fortified an island, probably as a dyke, and also established a nunnery here. This island should be Punta de l'Illa de Cullera, located 40 km south of Valencia, from where several archaeological finds, such as crucifixes, coins and amphorae (mostly of North African origin with only a few from the Eastern Mediterranean), and structures (including a substantial rectangular building *c.* 14 m long and 9 m wide, in the central area of the island) dated to the mid-6th century (Llobregat 1977; Roselló Mesquida 1995).

Obviously, the activities of the bishops were directly related to the wealth of their dioceses and, in some cases, to their own personal wealth – in a fashion reminiscent of ancient evergetism; as a result, we cannot presume that the building programmes of Justinian and the Merida bishops were matched by many other Hispanic bishoprics. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to suggest that comparable efforts were performed in the larger episcopal cities, such as Barcelona, Zaragoza and Sevilla, whereas we should expect much less scope for display in those more peripheral and small-scale sees, which had too weak an economy and elite base, both in urban and rural spheres, as will be explored in Chapter 6.

Living in the countryside: the archaeological evidence

The study of the new types of landscapes and their organisation has grown substantially in recent years, through fuller analysis of settlement forms and the main agrarian activities. Terms like social complexity and social inequality that now are common in many scientific texts reveal an increased interest from scholars regarding agency. However, the identification of rural populations remains a problem, even if it is true that, in comparison with the urban contexts,

our knowledge of the lower classes – in this case, the peasant communities – which always are under-represented in the textual sources, has now markedly increased (see papers in Quirós Castillo 2016).

After rejecting the simple duality of urban centres and *villae* – and recognising that there were other, lesser habitat types in the countryside (see Ariño Gil and Díaz Martínez 2002) – that had formed the articulation of the landscape and the social organisation in the late Roman period, a new mode of organisation and settlement activity was taking shape in the Iberian Peninsula, probably as a direct consequence of the many tensions generated in the 5th century.

The crystallisation of the process implied a changed structuring of rural society, with a weakened central and urban authority and a damaged and impoverished economy fundamental in this (Hamerow 2002, 89–93). The difficulty, however, is to observe this process in both excavations and surveys, since many of the material markers of the Roman period faded from the 5th century. For example, our knowledge of the residences of 'leaders' and elites in these rural contexts is as scarce as it is in the cities. Apart from the examples of Parpalinas and the Pla de Nadal building especially, our information is virtually non-existent. It is feasible that the *possessores* had residences both in the urban centres and in the other rural properties, or even in the hilltop sites, and from there managed, via intermediaries, their lands. The problem is that we cannot identify such residences in any of these contexts; perhaps we are wrongly looking for luxurious *domus*, similar to ones that we know of for the late Roman period, without accepting that we must recognise a different, more impoverished, less showy mode of habitation, lacking mosaics and baths.

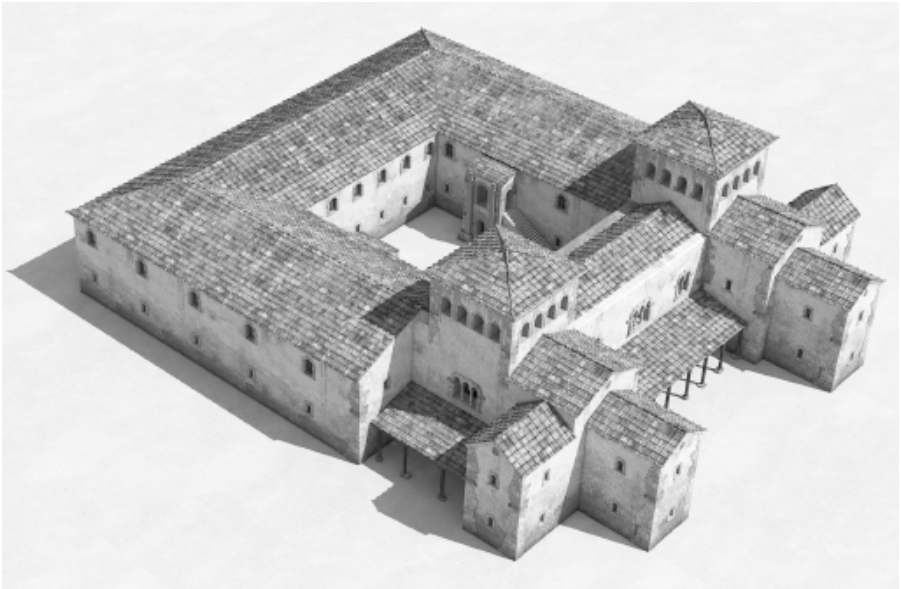

Figure 14. Hypothetical reconstruction of the building of Pla de Nadal (image courtesy of Ayuntamiento de Riba-roja de Túria).

In fact, the magnificent complex of Pla de Nadal (Fig. 14) is not related to any simple landowner but rather, as noted above, with Thedomir, a notable Visigothic nobleman high in royal court circles, who had a significant role in events in the south-east of the Iberian Peninsula. The building, which had clear symbolic and representative significance, comprised a functional and rather austere ground floor, and a top floor, totally collapsed, from which came a huge number of architectural pieces – almost 800 fragments – including reused Roman capitals and also newer ones in an Eastern/ Byzantine style – signifying its use for both residential and 'ceremonial' representative functions (Ribera i Lacomba 2005b).

The identification is based, first, on a cruciform anagram that seems to correspond to a proper name starting with the Germanic root *Teud-* and, secondly, on a graffiti with the name *Teudinir* incised inside a scallop shell. However, the location close to Valencia counters such an attribution for some scholars (*e.g.* Gutiérrez Lloret 2013, 255). If, as seems likely, the heart/focus of the *Kūra* of *Tudmīr* was, in name and territory, a transcript of the dominion of the Thedomir, so it is difficult to accept that his residence lay outside of his own territory, and in the immediate vicinity of an urban centre that would become capital of the neighbouring and bordering *Kūra* of Valencia. However, we should recognise that pinpointing the borders between both territories is problematic, and so the exact identification of the

building remains an open question. Pla de Nadal, nonetheless, remains the sole known example of a Visigothic rural palatine complex.[13]

Otherwise, we know of residences, mainly ones far from concepts like 'representation', and instead related more to peasants and, maybe, modest local elites. In recent years, the material visibility of the peasantry is starting to reveal something of their social structure and of the main traits in their relationship to landowners (Wickham 2005, 519–588). Useful sources to help clarify this relationship could be the so-called 'Visigothic inscribed slates' – labelled as *Pizarras Visigodas* (Velázquez Soriano 1989; 2000) – some of these found in archaeological contexts and others as casual finds, and encountered in the regions of Salamanca and Avila, a small area of the central Iberia, and dated between the 6th to 8th centuries. These slates are lists in Latin of census payments and some lists with names of peasants/farmers, as well as what can be labelled 'schoolwork', liturgical texts, psalms, letters and even a variety of legal documents. However, there are still problems of interpretation of these thin slates, which largely appear to represent a form of private, perhaps 'estate' documentation. There are three basic typologies to these slates: numeric, textual (with religious, contract sales or judicial texts) and figured (featuring drawings of religious buildings and agriculture works). One recent view sees a tributary significance to these slates, reflecting thereby some legal communications channel linking a central or regional authority with local powers/elites. Certainly, they are striking evidence for a literate and functional Visigothic administration, aware of ownerships, economic needs and agricultural production (Martín Viso 2006b; Díaz Martínez and Martín Viso 2011). Another argument is that these slates relate to a monastic domain located around Salvatierra de Tormes (Salamanca), or, less probably, to a *fundus* and the property of a wealthy landlord (Ariño Gil 2011, 267–270).

Either way, these slates are good indicators of the control by literate local and regional elites over a rural landscape and workforce, much more active in this period than in the preceding one. Indeed, the construction and progressive reinforcement of the Visigothic State over the 6th century did not mean the end of regional elites controlling the many territories, and so the monarchy tended to build up the trust with these aristocracies through different types of collaboration: cooperation based on a reciprocal loyalty to the kingdom and royal donations and concessions to the local hegemonies was key in the durability and stability of the Visigothic realm (Castellanos and Martín Viso 2005).

It seems no mere coincidence, therefore, that these slates derive

from the Duero Valley, an area where the strength of these aristocracies is known. In fact, this area also has a profusion, compared to other peninsular regions, of defended hilltop settlements, which were core to this elite's control of both territory and peasantry; indeed, we can argue that the severe urban decay in this area favoured or prompted the need for alternative foci and control points. As seen,[14] the building techniques evident in these hilltop sites, the quality of the material culture and the presence of defences reveal a clear social differentiation between the inhabitants here and those in the low-lying villages, hamlets and farms (Tejerizo García 2012).

In fact, this is one of the clearest signals of social framing and hierarchisation that we can find in the Hispanic territory between the 5th and 8th centuries. Such distinctions are, by contrast, almost wholly absent in the other types of rural settlements. The emergence of a new generation of settlements, both *ex-novo* villages and hamlet foundations and units that appeared over the ancient *villae*, together with scattered farms, has been called a 'network of peasant villages' (Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera 2006, 79–85), which was, by and large, stable across the 6th to 8th centuries.

The houses in these rural settlements were built with perishable materials and consisted mainly of rectangular or quadrangular structures, with mixed functions; but we also find so-called sunken-featured buildings (*Grubenhäuser*) that are an interesting particularity of this period, with most of these structures with rectangular layouts, although a few had round layouts (it is interesting to note that in the centre-south of the northern Meseta we find sites with a high proportion of sunken features buildings over other types of structure, whereas the south-western Meseta was characterised by the lack of sunken-featured buildings, see Tejerizo García 2012). Both types of buildings were often used in combination, as evident in excavated contexts in the north-west peninsula, such as in La Mata del Palomar (Nieva, Segovia), where, as well as houses and sunken-feature buildings, two production areas with furnaces, spaces for farming and cultivating and vats linked to metalworking were recognised.

Within these villages, we can observe no clear social differentiation in terms of planning, and the domestic units seem to have roughly the same dimensions and built with the same materials in most cases, although, as always in this period, there are important exceptions, such as the site of Lancha de Trigo (Diego Álvaro, Ávila), where the domestic quadrangular structures ranged between 19.5 m^2 and over 740 m^2 of internal space. This site was excavated in the 1940s and 1950s, and unfortunately much information was lost or not recorded

(Gutiérrez Palacios *et al.* 1958). Noticeably, there are no silos, as a consequence of the difficulty of cutting the typical granite of the geologic substratum here, so maybe some larger units were used as granaries or stocking spaces.

In Ladera de los Prados (Aguasal, Valladolid), excavations point to a quite stable settlement from the early 6th century until its abandonment in the mid-8th. Here the only differentiation is related to the activities: silos were located in two different sets, one in the northern area, with *c*. 12 storage pits probably attached to a domestic unit, and *c.* 30 pits in the southern area, while the domestic units appeared in the central part. Between these three areas, there are empty zones which probably formed cultivated spaces (Vigil-Escalera 2010).

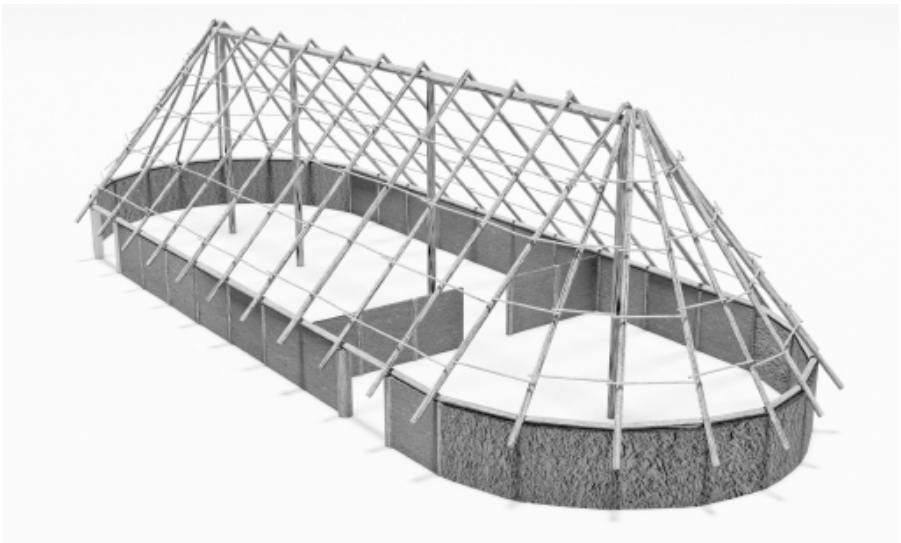

Figure 15. 3D reconstruction of the longhouse excavated at Aistra (image courtesy of J. A. Quirós Castillo and A. Reynolds).

While these same house typologies appear in many areas of the Peninsula, there is one typology that seems concentrated exclusively in the Basque Country, namely the *longhouse*. For example, in Gasteiz, both sunken-featured buildings and one longhouse have been identified (Azkarate Garai-Olaun and Solaun 2009), in a space of 3,330 m2, where today is located the cathedral of Santa María. Even though excavations covered a wide area, this is only a small percentage of a bigger village. In any case, it seems that the excavated area corresponds with an agrarian exploitation unit, which from the end of the 7th century until the mid-10th century had a slightly sunken rectangular structure, which then was replaced by a longhouse

(18 × 8.5 m), whose internal division is unclear. At Aistra (Zalduonado, Álava), a longhouse of 20 × 6 m – the internal spaces are not well understood, although some lines of postholes suggest a subdivision of at least two spaces – was built in the 7th century, of boat-shaped design, and a second one (25 × 10 m) with similar characteristics, in the 8th century, when the site was redesigned (Fig. 15). These boat-shaped longhouses are not common in other southern European areas, and, where recognised, they tend to be identified as elite residences (Quirós Castillo 2013b, 204–206).

A key point of reference is the site of Gózquez, located just 50 km from Toledo, the capital of the Visigothic Kingdom, and probably one of the best excavated villages of central Spain. The settlement is articulated, as said, into two parts with a cemetery in between, and with a coherent, planned distribution of the residential and agrarian rectangular plots (these 45 × 80 m in extent on average), which were maintained across the site's entire occupation sequence (Vigil-Escalera 2007; 2010; Fig. 16). There are houses on stone plinths, with different formats, and sunken-feature buildings, but these architectures do not permit us to see any clear social differentiation among the residents and workers in this village. Materially, some scarce fragments of glass vessels,[15] of imported amphorae and North African red slip ware, together with metalwork, reveal some elements of 'prestige' and social differentiation; but it is unclear if these objects help show 'higher level' peasants or point to a village chief (and family).

Gózquez is currently the principal exemplar of a village network in the Central Plateau in which it is possible to trace economic specialisations, above all in the cultivation of cereal, although livestock also played a role. In this area, both Gózquez and the village of El Pelícano had a further specialisation in terms of the cultivation and exploitation of olive groves; at Gózquez, an oil press is known. In contrast, in the area close to the River Jarama, villages seem more engaged in the cultivation of fruit trees (Vigil-Escalera 2006; 2007).

Livestock were raised and exploited in all the villages of this area. In fact, diversified productive activities in the Central Plateau sites indicate that the communities were largely self-sufficient, but likely able to generate surpluses, probably to cover taxes (or tribute) and also to engage in economic interaction with other communities. The regular silos – many of notable dimensions (*e.g.* in Ladera de los Prados, some of them reached almost 4,000–5,000 litre capacity) – are physical signs of this ability to harness and store goods. It is interesting to note also that animals not usually consumed; dogs, cats and equids, in particular, occur in the archaeological record of some

sites, including Gózquez – at the latter, with more than 3,500 identified fragments, caprines, cattle, equids, pigs, dogs and cats, which constitute 99% of the assemblage, and with pets the least represented (Vigil-Escalera *et al.* 2014). Oxen and cows were part of the labour force and, together with sheep and goats, fundamental for dairy and meat products, while pigs are much less well represented. Skins were an additional resource, but we do not have as much data on their local usage. At Gózquez, the animal ratios remain fairly stable over time – reflective of a stable landscape.

Although Roman animal husbandry techniques still seem to have been applied, there were probably some changes in livestock management under the Visigothic period (feeding techniques, diminished intensification of agricultural outputs, etc.). In a recent study of these issues in Spain (Grau-Sologestoa 2015), drawing on data from several sites, an interesting panorama emerged, indicating that the size of domesticates in this period decreased: cattle, after the 8th century; sheep/goats (a decrease in whose size started earlier), during the 6th and 7th centuries and with a further reduction in subsequent centuries; and pigs, whose size decreased over the early medieval period and especially in the 8th and 9th centuries.

Sheep and goats likely provided most of the meat proteins in the diet of the settlements of the central region of Spain and the main raw material for textile production, for which we have evidence in almost all the rural contexts of this area. In those villages for which it is possible to analyse food consumption patterns, such as Gózquez, we see communities with the same access to food resources and an omnivorous and land-based (not marine) diet, based on plants with small contributions of proteins (cf. García-Collado 2016). Hunting likely offered a supplementary meat contribution, and we can note that the Visigothic legislation permitted this activity, which was never restricted to the nobility alone (Salisbury 1994) until later in the Late Middle Ages (Caro 2006).

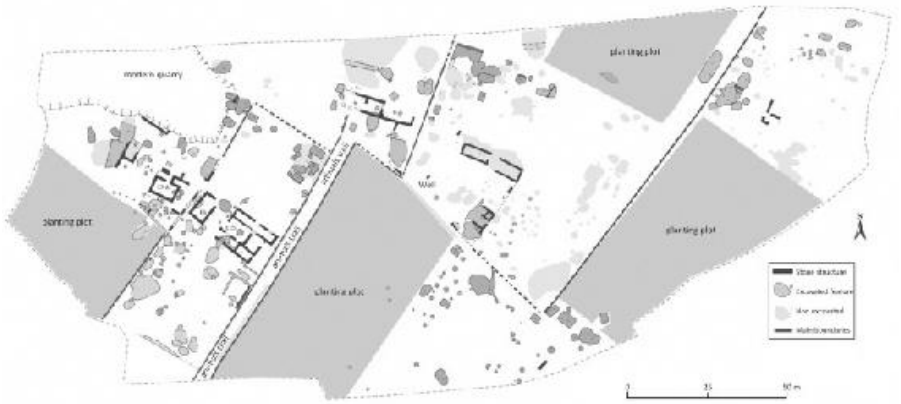

Figure 16. Boundaries between different households, a fenced pathway and cultivated plots in the eastern half of the village of Gózquez (image courtesy of A. Vigil-Escalera).

This economic diversification does not imply any obvious social differentiation, although we remain ignorant of ownership of flocks and herds, or whether some were held in common property. Likewise, in the villages themselves, the size and form of domestic units, the quality and quantity of furniture/internal fittings, the construction techniques, material culture, denote no evident recognisable social classes. Again, we need more excavations of houses and rubbish deposits to offer fuller discussion on this issue.

However, there is scope to look at the bodies of the inhabitants, to see if the funerary record gives other insights. First of all, we must bear in mind that, unfortunately, we do not know of funerary practices in the countryside in the immediately preceding period. Some information is available for late antique *possessores* and the *mausolea* sometimes built in the *partes rusticae* of their properties, as seen at El Pelícano, but we lack any data for the people who worked in these *villae* and cannot ascertain whether they were buried on the villa estate. It has been suggested that cremations prevailed, but with the ashes then dispersed or deposited without an urn (Vigil-Escalera 2015, 157–159). In any case, the information is very scarce, meaning that we are moving in areas closer to supposition than facts.

The visibility of the funerary record in the countryside grows significantly from the 5th century, when the number of cemeteries or burial grounds seems to increase significantly; in these, grave goods and funerary deposits were relatively common.[16] Gózquez's burial ground contained around 360 burials, of which only one-third contained grave goods – this representative of the so-called Visigothic-type necropoleis – which is a similar fraction to the practice seen in other rural cemeteries of this period, such as Espirdo-Veladiez

(Segovia), Carpio del Tajo (Toledo), Herrera de Pisuerga (Palencia) and the necropoleis of villages of the Madrid region (see papers in Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera 2011). These elements of personal dress or adornment could be interpreted as pointing to a level of social competitiveness that may in turn give some sign of hierarchy (Contreras Martínez and Fernandez Ugalde 2006) and also propose some level of 'leadership'. By the end of the 6th century, however, funerary goods start to disappear, becoming completely absent in the 7th and 8th centuries.

Interestingly, at present, we see no clear differences between cemeteries related to villages – which usually were sited between 30–100 m away from the residential area – and those related to the hilltop settlements, even though it is argued that the latter should be viewed as higher-status communities. The location of these hilltop-site cemeteries was usually outside of the walls, as at Las Merchanas and la Yecla de Yeltes (both in Salamanca region), but close to the walls (Maluquer de Motes 1968; Martín Valls 1982); however, there are also examples of burial grounds inside, as seen at La Dehesa de la Oliva (Patones, Madrid; Fig. 17). Indeed, this site (Vigil Escalera 2012) is divided into two platforms and the necropolis – this partly excavated, so far with 33 bodies – is included in the upper one (the so-called acropolis). In both platforms there are domestic units and roads; however, in the upper one it has been possible to document a late Republican period planning, while in the lower platform occupation started only around the 5th century and shows an organic and disorganised design. The upper cemetery is dated to between the 5th–6th century and the 8th century and some of the burials (8) have funerary goods, although these are not really lavish, such as a gold ring, belt buckle and fibula. Orientation varied, as did the typology of the tombs: simple pits, cists built with flagstones (of limestone material or slate) and grave walls of masonry. It has been proposed that the upper terrace/acropolis was probably used for funerary uses in the post-classical life of the settlement (Vigil-Escalera 2012, 255). Yet, overall, as in the villages, those hilltop-site cemeteries do not usually have any attached churches. Indeed, the pattern of parochial[17] church and associated cemetery did not properly emerge in the Iberian Peninsula until the 10th century (Azkarate Garai-Olaun 2002, 130).

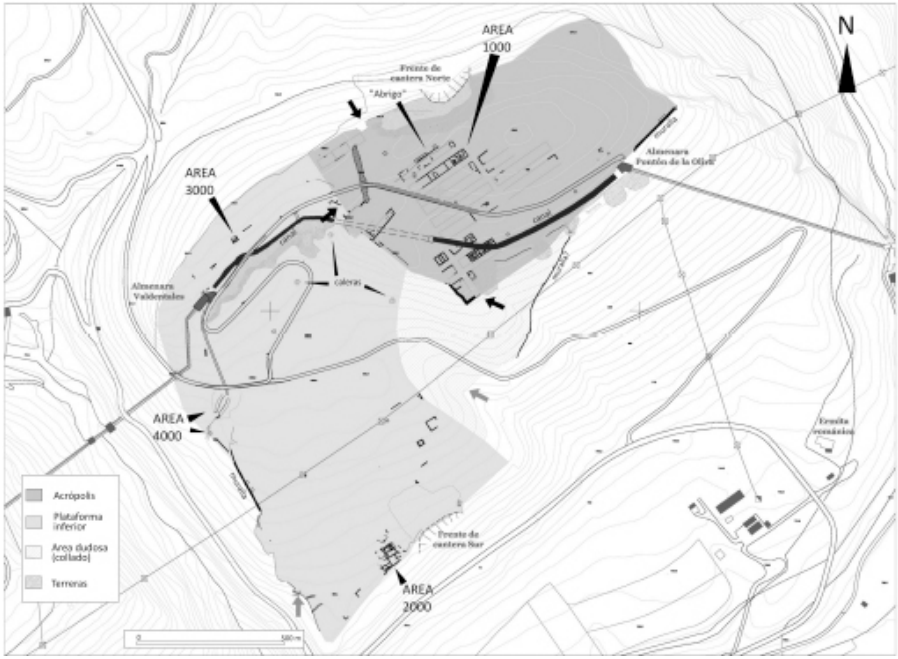

Figure 17. Plan of the hilltop site of Dehesa de Patones (image courtesy of A. Vigil-Escalera).

The best-known and best-studied areas for interpreting the funerary record, as for other aspects of the post-classical rural context, are the Catalan region, the Duero Valley and the Madrid–Toledo area. In these regions we can recognise that many villages had a single cemetery that was in use over a number of centuries; occasionally we find more than one necropolis associated with a settlement, as at Loranca and Berrocales, both in the Madrid region. Overall, between the 5th and 9th centuries, three predominant burial modes prevailed in these rural contexts: (i) the least common of these was burial without any funerary structure, and isolated burials – sometimes beyond the formal cemetery, sometimes in the settlement itself; (ii) burial in the community burial ground with formal tomb (earth-cut or with coffin) but without grave goods; (iii) burial in the community space with grave goods. The cemeteries tend not to have associated churches, but a few are known (Vigil-Escalera 2013). These types are probably the main expression of social heterogeneity that we can find in these peasant burial records.

The topographical characteristics of these sites address a dominant position in the landscape: the usual location of these necropoleis was on a hill, close to a flow of water or in the vicinity of a

communication road (Ripoll López 1989). Perhaps surprisingly, there are no significant differences between the isolated burials – often set in small groups of no more than six inhumations, these probably family units – and the village cemeteries, which have few distinctive variations between them, with comparable age and gender profiles and tomb typologies. It is only recently that anthropological analyses of these funerary places have been made. In the rural cemetery of El Ruedo (Almedinilla, Córdoba), with most of the tombs E–W oriented and dated to between the 4th and the 6th century, 202 bodies were recovered. It was possible to note a high rate of mortality between 20 and 40 years, with only 5% reaching mature age (40–60). Infant mortality, that is, of those under 14 years of age, was especially cruel when it concerned children between 5 and 9 years. It seems that there was a slightly higher rate of mortality in women, although it was impossible to determine the sex of all the bodies, because they were very deteriorated. Nutritional deficiencies were studied as well as oral hygiene and pathologies, such as arthropathies, which point to a poor and hard-working population (Carmona Berenguer 2007).

Slightly different, however, is the situation with special deposits. Burials in non-formal funerary contexts, that is, bodies cast into pits or ditches, have been identified as a form of social exclusion and, more specifically, as a possible confirmation of the presence of slaves in post-Roman rural contexts (Vigil-Escalera 2016). An important number of cases are known in Cataluña (recorded in Roig Buxó and Coll Riera 2011), as at Cam Gambús-1, a settlement active between the 6th and 8th centuries, where, out of 232 excavated storage silos, ten had been used/reused as funerary 'containers', with 15 bodies quantified. The majority of these are individual 'interments', although some contained two bodies. Where they occur it is not unusual for these human bodies to mingle with other animal bones, of dogs and cats, but also cattle and sheep – an act effectively of dehumanising these persons and their bodies. Where undertaken, palaeoanthropological study shows pathological and dietary differences between these possible 'outcasts' and the people buried in the cemeteries. In Els Mallols (6th–8th century), out of 139 documented silos, four contained human remains, three with a single body in each and one with two children, two men and one woman, which had been thrown in (potentially at the same time?) together with a dead dog. Other examples include Can Cabassa, where nine silos had human remains, again sometimes together with dog bodies; and Can Bonvilar, where two out of 59 silos had this same kind of deposition.

Noticeably, these pit interments or deposits also occur in relation to hilltop sites, such as at Simancas (Valladolid), where at least two silos located inside the fortified enclosure contained human remains from an adult, these dated to the mid-5th century (Vigil-Escalera 2013, 16).

In the Madrid region, this type of dehumanised human deposit seems relatively common, evident at well-excavated village sites like Gózquez and El Pelícano, and at Berrocales-Ahijones where, separate from over 1,000 inhumations in the necropolis, there were at least five deposits in silos. However, one of these differs and fits into a sub-group category, which is small in number, in which the silo deposition seems to have a pseudo-funerary action, with an adaptation of a (pre-existing) pit and sometimes also the management of silos for subsequent inhumations. Thus, at Berrocales-Ahijones, the bodies of four persons were placed in the same very large pit, set with the same orientation with heads to the west and with a careful placement of the three people over the first body. The lower part of the silo had in fact been enlarged to accommodate the first cadaver (Vigil-Escalera 2013; 2016).

These kinds of burials in non-funerary places are known across the Early Middle Ages, from the 5th century until at least the 8th century, and occur in many of the well-excavated villages in the Iberian Peninsula, as in other European territories. In cases where it has been possible to compare with the people buried in the village's cemetery, both their sex and age correspond to the average value of the rural population in those cemeteries. We see individual or multiple burials in 'clean' or partially reused containers, or in silos with a ritual or simply thrown in. There were also occasional children in these funerary deposits, which might exclude the possibility that this kind of burial was a consequence of, for instance, punishment for a criminal act. However, these pit burials are contemporary to the use of the village's cemetery and the isolated graves that also coincide in this period. Consequently, it seems that there was a clear choice to separate people in death, probably in reflection of a segregation in life, likely from birth.

Both 'rough pit burial' and 'more careful pit burial' forms are characterised as occurring outside the regular burial grounds, suggestive of a clear exclusion of these people from the main community. Other hypotheses have been presented (covered by Vigil-Escalera 2016), highlighting, for example, the ritual character of these 'special deposits' (Hamerow 2006); some scholars suggest rushed burials during exceptional events such as plagues and epidemics (Blaizot 2006, 282) – although the low incidences would counter this

idea, since more multiple interments might be expected; or they result from punishments/executions, which would not necessarily result in signs of violence on the bones (*e.g.* strangulation). Overall, the generally accepted view is that these silo burials relate to socially excluded people: as noted, there is textual evidence for unfree people in this period, even in a Christianised context. In fact, serfdom and slavery were combined in this society, since peasants could own slaves and use them for menial, tough tasks (see Wickham 2005, 259–261). We might observe the absence of specific spaces in the peasants' houses which might relate to these non-free people, and it is difficult to determine where they were lodged, whether sharing spaces with the proprietors – which seems unlikely in this period – or simply sleeping in the stables or barns for animals.

Interestingly, unlike what is known for the Catalan example of Can Gambús-1, the detailed study of Gózquez (García-Collado 2016) identified no substantial differences in the food consumption and diet of both groups of people (peasants/villagers in the cemetery and the potential 'unfree' in the silos), according to carbon and nitrogen stable-isotope analysis. Perhaps the ownership of one or more slaves was one of the few ways to display a different, slightly higher and free social standing of some of these peasants in these villages. However, given the low numbers of these pit burials, either the numbers of slaves were few, or many were favoured enough to be interred in the community cemetery instead.

Unfortunately, we can say little more about the composition of the cemeteries themselves, in terms of possible organisation of spaces by family groups or with possible 'leaders' or 'leading families'. What we should recall, of course, is that the act of burial was a visual event for the living, and we cannot recreate how such ceremonies were made; potentially any social status might have been remembered in words and not in the ground itself. Afterwards, the buried person became part of the collectiveness of the cemetery, part of the community's past and *memoria*. Here we must bear in mind that we are trying to understand more than three centuries of funerary practices, and it is likely that the identities and their reflection in the funerary contexts shifted during this period (for an overview of the research on identities in funerary contexts in medieval archaeology in general, see Williams and Sayer 2009). The relationship between material culture and identity, however, is not seen as straightforward and more discussion is needed on these displays, modes and changes. But we should note that in the 5th and 6th centuries grave goods appeared only in certain rural necropoleis – with no significant differences

between those cemeteries linked to villages, at those at hamlets or hilltop sites – but not in all graves, which suggests some type of differentiation in the community itself, especially in a depressed context, such as the peasant one.

Hierarchies and social inequalities in the archaeological record: an unresolved issue?

As a result of the breakdown of the Roman economic and social system in the 5th century, a new picture emerged in which the territorial (and administrative) fragmentation generated various local and regional systems of power. How these powers articulated the organisation of the territory, its settlements and natural resources, and how they managed their properties is not, as indicated above, always easily recognisable in the archaeological record.

Cities and towns continued, arguably, to act as central places in the organisation of the landscape, although we should add to these the emerging sets of hilltop sites, where probably what we might call the 'local' aristocracies were based, using these well-protected sites to control people and organise the surrounding lands, collecting taxes and directing production activities. Indeed, these probably acted as intermediaries between the rural strata and the high(er) elite, these comprising what we can call the 'territorial' aristocracy, who would have been in contact with 'State' authorities or officials of the Visigothic Kingdom and with Church or ecclesiastical powers, such as bishops. Those were located in the cities, where the main decisions in the political and economical administration were taken. In fact, bishops and *comes ciuitatis*, together with a solid urban administration formed by an important group of public officials, managed a broad range of activities from the cities. The materiality of the actions of bishops is evident in many urban-focused constructions, notably the cathedral and the episcopal palace, whereas the 'civic' powers remain obscure in the archaeological record. These absences are difficult to interpret, but it probably reveals a reinforcement of the Christian elite compared to the secular one or, at least, a reinforcement of the Christian orbit and the figure of the bishop, who progressively gathered in the many strands of power.

Our social analysis still needs to explore many aspects, but most probably we should be looking at domestic architecture as a material translation of the economic situation, the cultural identity and the needs of people; buildings are key guides in the study of social relations and behaviour within any large community. Yet the domestic

spaces within urban sites in the Early Middle Ages overall show a simplification of building techniques, with poorer quality construction elements including more use of timber for walls and partitions; at the same time, houses combined more often both residential but also (sometimes low-level) productive and artisanal activities. The archaeological visibility of small houses close to cultivated and landfill areas point to an impoverished society, which supported the basis of the urban production, both specialised – such as metal- and glass-working – and non-specialised.

The paradox in terms of the rural household analysis is that, while for Late Antiquity we have a good understanding of elite residences, centred on the *villae*, and a weak one of lower-class units, for the early medieval period, our knowledge is by contrast heavily biased towards peasant settlements (villages, farms, etc.) and with serious problems evident when seeking to identify aristocracies in the archaeological record. This reality reveals a clear change in the frame and scale of the domestic units in this transitional period, with an important variety of architectural solutions and materials – these, in many cases, combined – that in addition signify an unstoppable social change.

Apart from cases like Pla de Nadal, it is only in the rare examples of longhouses and especially in the hilltop settlements where we can recognise some kind of 'elite' domestic unit, in terms of stone-built houses, some traces of planning and some more 'distinctive' material culture, such as imported ceramics, glass and metalwork (although some villages, like Gózquez, do feature some of these materials, too, but these at minimal levels). This complex picture, in my opinion, does point to differing levels of social organisation, but currently it is very difficult to distinguish clearly free and unfree peasants, village leaders, small and local aristocracies, territorial elite powers and so on. Maybe it is possible to accept that any socio-economic differences between normal peasants and the village leaders were only reflected on the funerary record; and, as seen, we can also use mortuary contexts to recognise (if we accept Vigil-Escalera's hypothesis (2013, 31–33), in my opinion, convincing), slaves as persons excluded from the community graveyards and treated in death like domestic animals.

In the villages and hamlets, however, there was no clear social differentiation in the living arrangements: no differences in the domestic structures and lifestyles, nor apparently in diets or pathologies. Only in the rare presence of ceramic imports or glass vessels in some domestic units might we consider links – by individuals or families or craftspeople – with a wider world of cities and power centres like hilltop sites.

It is true that strong 'social markers' seen in some of the funerary records – belt buckles, jewellery, arms and so on – are absent from the cities, which overall lack (so far) this kind of burial ground with graves with 'typical' Visigothic goods. It is difficult to find a satisfactory explanation to this situation, but perhaps in these urban contexts this kind of self-representation was not necessary, because the elite were clear and socially defined enough through their place of residence, and their styles of life, food and dress. And we should bear in mind that, even in rural funerary displays, the items 'on show' were not what we would call materially rich or lavish; such goods would probably not have appealed to the urban aristocracies. In any case, these grave goods almost completely disappear from the 7th century, thereby complicating even further our perception of hierarchies and inequalities in this last century of the Visigothic Kingdom.

Notes

1 On these multiple usurpers and the reactions from Rome and by authorities in the Iberian Peninsula, see Chapter 2, pp. 16–24.

2 In the *Lex Romana Visigothorum* (X, 5, 1), for example, the *coloni* had a personal bond towards the owner, equating them with the servitude.

3 In some cases, however, they were included in the generic term of *servitus*, together with the *servi*, as cited in the sixth canon of the III Council of Toledo.

4 There are several versions of this pact, with some variations. For an overview of this problem, see Gutiérrez Lloret, 1996: 226–227.

5 The place name Mūla given in the pact is often identified with Cerro de la Almagra (a now uninhabited site close to modern Mula); the archaeological record may well confirm this identification (Gónzalez Fernández and Fernández Matallana 2010).

6 Both figures appeared in the *Chronicle of 754* (also called the *Mozarabic Chronicle*), here cited by the edition and translation of J. E. López Pereira, 1980: 113–115. In any case, it is not clear if Athanagild was his son. Gutiérrez Lloret says he was not; in fact, the texts only directly name Theodemir's daughter, who was given in marriage to the ŷundi 'Abd al-Ŷabbār b. Nadīr. For a discussion – and the related bibliography – on this marriage and the figure of Athanagild, see Gutiérrez Lloret 1998, 146–147.

7 Donations and inheritances from aristocrats and magnates became one of the most common ways to enrich the Church.

8 The original epitaph is lost, but a copy of the text was made in the 9th-century manuscript lat. 8093 of the National Library of Paris (Díaz y Díaz 1959, n. 63. See the analyses in Vives 1969, n. 279 and Llobregat 1977).

9 Justinian was brother to three other bishops: Justus of Urgel, Elpidius of Huesca and Nebridius of *Egara* (Tarrasa); the latter also oversaw much architectural renewal of his city's episcopal complex (see Moro and Tuset 2003).

10 On the urban development of this area of the city and its relationship with the Visigothic State, see Chapter 3.

11 For the best-known examples, see Chapter 3, p. 40.

12 An inscription dated to 661 notes a series of reforms by the abbess Eugenia (Vives 1969, n. 358).
13 We can also cite the case of Algezares (see Chapter 4, p. 64), which many scholars assign a Christian character, even if its function and owner are unclear.
14 Hilltop sites are discussed in Chapter 4.
15 During the 6th and 7th centuries, glass production seemingly only occurred in urban centres such as *Toletum* (De Juan Ares *et al.* 2009, 132) and *Reccopolis* (Castro Priego and Gomez de la Torre Verdejo 2008).
16 For a detailed analysis of the different types of necropoleis and discussions about ethnicity, material culture and buried people, see Chapter 7.
17 *Parrochia* was synonymous of dioceses in Visigothic times (Ripoll López and Velázquez Soriano 1999, 113–115).

Chapter 6

Christian leaders? Impacts on town, country and people

Introduction: the new religion and its social insertion

Once accepted and supported by (many of) the emperors and the State in the 4th century following the Edict of Milan (AD 313), Christianity enjoyed many fiscal, patrimonial and jurisdictional privileges that were crucial in aiding its rapid and profound growth in both society and in physical form. Already from the reign of Constantine (306–337), the Christian clergy was legally equated with the pagan priestly colleges, exempting them from *munera personalia*, meaning that they were relieved of a series of charges and services, such as the obligation of giving accommodation and food to the imperial Court and to military officials or the duty of joining the curia. Furthermore, from AD 321, the Church gained the right to accept donations and testaments/gifts from wills (*CTh.* XVI. 2. 4) and enjoyed many tax breaks (*CTh.* XI. 1. 1; XIII. 1. 1; XVI. 2. 8; XVI. 2. 10); such rights promptly granted the Church great financial stability and economic independence (for an overview of these prerogatives, see Fuentes Hinojo 2006). For some decades, the Church still faced issues with residual paganism; but from AD 380 Christianity was made the official State religion and the only permitted religion in the Empire, as declared by the emperor Theodosius, thus making the Church (finally) the sole ideological base and point of legitimacy for the imperial government.

The benefits that these imperial laws gave to the ecclesiastical officialdom, in particular the bishops, as heads of urban Christian communities, in time formed, without doubt, an important incentive for the Senatorial aristocracy to 'migrate' to the new religion (although there was anxiety by some high elites about retaining their

wealth in the context of the new, Christian charity concept). Thus we see how, from the 4th century, but especially from the 5th, the episcopate was directly formed from and related to the civic establishment, especially the municipal oligarchy and the provincial aristocracy. It is important to note that the older leadership groups, for example the *curiales*, had, since the time of the Tetrarchs, suffered increasing fiscal pressure and reacted badly to the economic crisis (marked also by declining investment in towns); as a result, we find that an ecclesiastical career came to develop as a favourable option. The evident appointment of Christians to leading administrative positions no doubt generated a willingness to convert. Thus, the prosopographical analysis of extant 4th-century bishop lists shows a clear aristocratic origin for many of them. It is argued that the lower social strata were less permeable to the new religion and that paganism in its diverse forms remained deeply rooted during the late Roman centuries, notably in the rural contexts; at the same time, we must assume that many poorer citizens benefited from the new religion in its emphasis on charity (MacKenna 1938; Díaz Martínez and Torres Prieto 2001).

While these were the 'official' steps of the new religion from Constantine's reign onwards, its arrival and insertion within the Western Empire started some time before and it was much more discreet by the first centuries. For the Iberian Peninsula, the first known references to Christian communities come from the mid-3rd century,[1] thanks to Cyprian of Carthage, whose Epistle 67 refers to an organised community under a bishop in *Emerita* by AD 254. In addition, it has been suggested that the presence of Jews in *Hispania* since the 1st century AD probably helped the spread of Christian ideas in urban centres, given its monotheist character, some similar precepts and its common geographical origin (Trebolle 2005).

Information about these first groups of Christians grows significantly in the late 3rd and early 4th century, in the context of the 'Great Persecution' under Emperor Diolcletian. Indeed, we have the first material realisation of martyrs from the 4th century, when the first dedicated shrines or *martyria* arose at various cities, as in the case of *Emerita* (see below), early on a focus of attraction. Throughout the 4th century, cities such as *Caesaraugusta* (with its known 18 martyrs), *Tarraco* (named martyrs: Fructuosus, Augurius and Eulogius), *Emerita* (Eulalia), *Gerunda* (Felix), *Hispalis* (Justa and Rufina), *Valentia* (Vicente), to name the better known ones, identified those people who gave their life for their faith as protectors of the cities (Castillo Maldonado 1999). The phenomenon of the martyr's cult (and later

relics) originated in funerary areas, namely the *suburbia*, coinciding usually with the place where they were buried. This cult was behind the initial development of the new religion and was maintained across the Visigothic period.

Between AD 295 and 314[2] there was celebrated the first Hispanic Church Council, held in *Iliberris*: for this gathering 19 bishops and 24 presbyters (priests) travelled to the province of *Baetica*; here they discussed the internal organisation of the community, doctrinal and disciplinary issues (*e.g. can.* 18, citing perpetual ex-communion for any bishop or cleric convicted of fornication) and relations with other religious communities (*e.g. can.* 53, ex-communion for any clergy or worshiper who eats with Jews, which seems to relate to liturgical and religious reasons), among other questions. Thanks to the documentation for this first Council, it is possible to estimate that, by *c*. AD 300, there was already in *Hispania* a coherent and well-organised Church society/ organisation, with a defined hierarchy: it is striking that the bishops come from/were based in the Peninsula's main capitals – *Emerita*, *Corduba*, *Hispalis*, *Caesarugusta* and so on – while presbyters and deacons came from rural contexts (although it remains unclear whether these were villages or villas). Although the five Roman Hispanic provinces were represented at the Church Council, one can observe a preponderance of representatives from the southern region.

Indeed, the evidence of this Council allows us to observe, already in the 4th century, the clear urban character of this religion (see below, 'Early stages of Christianity in the urban context') and its more limited penetration into rural contexts. In fact, there seems largely to have been no real interest in undertaking a systematic Christianisation of the countryside; it was even recommended to the *villae* landlords that they respect the pagan worship of their dependants (see Martínez Maza 2007a, 180).

We should also note that worries with paganism – above all, with those newly converted Christians still performing pagan rituals, such as sacrifices and funerary feasts – were expressed at the *Iliberris* Council. Such concerns were evident, for example, in the prohibition of images (painted or sculpted figures of holy figures) in the new public churches, because they could confuse worshippers and induce them to idolatry (see *can.* 36), and the prohibition of having idols in one's home (*can.* 41, *ne idola in domibus suis habeant*); there was also a ban on wizardry, divination and curses (*e.g. can.* 6, which punished who anyone takes out someone *per maleficium*, i.e. by incantation/ curse). However, the most unwanted activity, one which would face

perpetual exclusion from the Church, was the offering of sacrifices in temples (*can.* 1, *ad templum idoli*; *can*. 2, related only to *flamines* – belonging to Imperial cult: thus, if, after baptism, someone continued with sacrifices, they must be excommunicated; *can*. 59, reports a total prohibition not just on making a sacrifice, but also attending one – *prohibendum ne quis christianus, ut gentiles, ad idolum Capitoli causa sacrificiandi ascendat et videat*). This situation shows an evident ambiguity, in which it was not unusual to find both sides in people – the Christian and Pagan customs side by side, and also the maintenance of temples in cities (Arce 2006).

And yet we must recognise that the diffusion of Christianity was a slow process, since, despite imperial support, it was not the sole religion of the State, but coexisted with many old gods and with the persistence of many pagan rituals and practices. Even at the end of the 4th century or the first decades of the 5th, we hear from Macrobius, in his *Saturnalia*, about how the *accitani*, who lived in the north of the *Baetica* province, were still worshipping the image of Mars. Similarly, Pacian, bishop of Barcelona, in his *Paraenesis ad Poenitentiam*, mentions the continuing existence of Christians still practising some pagan rituals. By the mid-5th century, Silvan, bishop of Calahorra, undertook a major campaign of conversions (Martínez Maza 2007a, 141–144). Even later, in the second half of the 6th century in the north-west of the Peninsula, the sermons of St Martin of Braga report on ongoing beliefs in superstitions related to fire, mountains, standing stones and so on – although here, as for other noted instances, we must question if such beliefs were 'pagan' or just old traditions. This area, we must recall, was then part of the Kingdom of the Suevi, many of whose Germanic population are thought to have continued as pagans – though many likely converted to Arianism in the second half of the 5th century – into the 6th century, since bishop/saint Martin of Braga was allowed to undertake missionary work, after curing the king's son (Ferreiro 1981; Díaz Martínez 1990).

The political instability that characterised the last decades of the Empire was probably behind the persistence or revival of some pagan practices and, in addition, of the appearance of some heretical movements, such as Priscillianism, in the Iberian Peninsula.[3] In the context of barbarian incursions, civil conflict and all the related upheavals in the economy, ideological/religious issues, despite continuing to generate concerns in law, were surely relegated to a much lower priority. The arrival of Suevi, Vandals and Alans, nevertheless, did not greatly change things for the Christian communities: while some bishops are said to have fled out of fear and

some churches were robbed, Christianity was not a target in itself. Some of the bishop-related episodes are more political than religious: thus, Hydatius was captured by Suevi and was held captive for three months (*Hyd., Chron.* 196), but he was betrayed by Romans, who were favourable to the Suevic presence; and bishop Leo of *Turiaso* (modern Tarazona, in Zaragoza province) (*Hyd., Chron.* 133) died defending his city (Arce 2005, 265–266).

However, even at the time of the arrival and settlement of the barbarian groups, from the earlier 5th century, it seems clear that many peninsular areas were not fully organised ecclesiastically, even in the urban sphere. In that regard, it could be argued that the Church's role, status and organisation in the Iberian Peninsula, although following the late Roman administrative civil scheme, was only consolidated and secured with the Visigoths.

By the time of that consolidation, we can see that local and urban organisation – religious, social, political and economic – had come into the hands of the bishops. In addition, thanks to the writings of Isidore, we can observe that the life and destiny of the *Toletum* monarchy were definitively ideologically associated with the Hispanic Church. A practical realisation of this was the king's prerogative of designating/ appointing bishops, which was also a route to distributing power between the State's aristocracy. Indeed, it has been shown that the number of Germanic bishops (or at least those with a Germanic name) grew significantly during the 7th century: they comprised 20% in AD 633 but, only 50 years after, this figure was almost 45% – which is a significant percentage if we consider that it has been estimated that less than the 10% of the peninsula's population was Gothic (Díaz Martínez 2007, 508).

The collaboration between kings and bishops was fundamental in the operations and stability of the Kingdom of Toledo. They agreed, for example, on the persecution of Jews and on attempts to convert them; and to the conversion to Catholicism of the kingdom with King Reccared at the III Council of Toledo (AD 589), which signified, among other questions, the religious unification of Hispano-Roman and Visigothic populations. We might identify that, unlike the Arian Church, the Catholic one had already a stable and articulated organisation. However, even if the Visigoths were converted to Arianism already by the end of the 4th century (see Heather and Matthews 1991, 137–139), there is little information about the creed, because after the conversion to Catholicism most of the related literary sources were subjected to a general destruction. In any case, when the Visigoths settled in the Iberian Peninsula they found a solid

episcopal structure and from the very beginning faced problems with the established Catholic clergy. During the 6th century, indeed, Arianism made major advances among the Hispano-Roman population, as revealed in the Catholic Councils – which show this as a constant worry – even if the worse tensions occurred during Leovigild's reign (Vallejo Girvés 2003).

From AD 589 especially, the Visigothic Church Councils formed a political and legislative organ of the kingdom, at which both ecclesiastical and secular aspects were covered (Díaz Martínez 1998b). Interestingly, these councils were interpreted as way of controlling the king: for example, at the IV Council of Toledo, AD 633, it was ordered that no monarch could act as sole judge and sentence in cases against the nobility (see Pino Abad 2016). But more recently it has been determined that, in reality, the councils and their significance depended on contemporary political contexts (Díaz Martínez 1999, 338–339) and, indeed, were also a route to control the nobility and to enhance ecclesiastical power within the administration of the realm (Thompsom 1969, 277–279). The reality is that these situations depended often on the personality and the ability of the kings (and his key court advisors) and the responsibility of episcopal power. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the king was the convener of the Council, he presided over the assembly and, more importantly, he gave royal confirmation and approval to any decisions agreed.

Early stages of Christianity in the urban context

By the time of the Council of *Iliberris*, Christianity still was a minority belief and prevalent mainly in the urban context. Nor was it an 'independent' belief system, since it drew on the classical and pagan world around it. A good illustration of this is the so-called *refrigerium*, *convivium* or *agapè*, which was a pagan practice that persisted in Christian cemeteries for many decades, traces of which can be seen, for example, in the cemeteries of Francolì in Tarragona and San Antón in Cartagena (Ripoll López and Molist Capella 2014); here archaeologists could identify the typical semicircular table for funerary meals, evoking the *stibadium* – a later form of the Roman *lectus triclinaris*, the reclining seat used by diners in the *triclinium* – of late Roman houses.

However, the absence of good archaeological evidence for Christianity and Christians in the first decades of the 4th century is common to the majority of urban centres in *Hispania* (and many other provinces). Only from the second half the 4th century[4] can we use the

evidence from funerary contexts, from both epitaphs and (fine) sarcophagi, to recognise a clear Christian aristocracy in the cities. Although some process of decentralisation of the ancient necropoleis came in this period, these seem related more to the general processes of urban transformation than directly with the dissemination of Christianity; indeed, we see how some pagan necropoleis became Christianised, but probably more because the Christian population was gradually growing, while some traditional spaces for burial were abandoned, while new ones appeared.

However, as Sales Carbonell (2016) has argued, our vision of the process is a little bit fuzzy, mainly due to our inability to identify tombs of Christians unless they contain items with clear Christian symbols or epitaphs. The problem is that, from the 3rd/4th century, cremation generally had been given up in favour of inhumation; furthermore, Pagans and Christians were often buried together in the same cemeteries. So, apart from clear examples such as the early Christian necropolis of Tarragona (for a detailed analysis, see López Vilar 2006), which grew up around the grave of bishop Fructuosus and those of the deacons Augurius and Eulogius (who were martyred in the city's amphitheatre in AD 259) and built over a pagan cemetery, in many cases we struggle to identify the faith of people in their burial locations. A striking feature of the Tarragona cemetery – in use until the 6th century and featuring more than 2,000 tombs and with an extension of 8m000 m^2 – was the erection in the earliest 5th century (perhaps even before) of a basilica with baptistery and, later, a church with three naves and a huge atrium. The privileged nature of its burial ground, with *mausolea* and sarcophagi, underlines the fact that in this period we often see an elite buried as Christian, able to display their new religion through structures and materials, whereas we see very little of that larger part of the community living with reduced economic resources, meaning that we have an incomplete picture of these first Christian urban citizens.

Indeed, the suburban areas are where there arose the first elements of martyrdom cult, which would determine in diverse ways the future topographic development of the late antique/early Christian and the later, medieval city, creating a polyfocal panorama, with different poles of attraction. Thus, in *Emerita*, by the second half of the 4th century, a suburban necropolis *ad sanctos* was focused on adoration at/around the *martyrium* and/or *memoria* of St Eulalia, which by the 5th century formed one of the most important Christian sites here. Prudentius, in his *Peristephanon* (written early in the 5th century), mentioned Eulalia and also, among other Hispanic martyrs, the 18

martyrs from *Caesaraugusta*, who likely had a dedicated basilica in the city's southern funerary sector (Mostalac and Escribano Paño 2009, 90). Similarly, in *Emporiae*, many suburban churches were built in these funerary contexts, some still seeing structural transformations into the medieval period (Aquilué and Nolla Brufau 1999, 98–99).

Such constructions were core components in the new physiognomy of suburban spaces in these centuries, and they often exploited and replaced parts of the past. One example is the basilica of St Leocadia in *Toletum*, whose builders used ashlar stone blocks taken from the redundant circus (Gurt i Esparraguera and Diarte-Blasco 2012). Both new and old buildings were located in the so-called Vega Baja, where intensive urban remodelling was carried out already in the 6th century. This Christian basilica was in fact the venue for many Church councils: it was built in 618 under King Sisebut, although we should postulate a pre-existing *cella memoriae* or chapel.

As discussed in Chapter 3, this topographical Christianisation was not evident in the intra-mural spaces until the mid-5th century, and above all in the 6th century. Before that, we have confusing and fragmented information, such as seen in *Emerita*, where a house's cistern was almost certainly converted into a pre-Constantinian *domus ecclesiae* – as suggested by a crismon depicted on a wall, probably to be linked to a private Christian community hiding from the persecutions and duly reflecting the secret nature of these first Christian meeting places (cf. Heras 2005, 507–533). In this example, the cistern, used as a gathering place, was located 3 m below the ground level, showing the nature of these clandestine reunions, in which in some cases the sacrament of baptism was also done. Such *domus ecclesiae*, seen from outside, would seem normal residences, no different to other houses. The existence of other *domus ecclesiae* in the Iberian Peninsula, above all in the earlier episcopal sees such as *Barcino*, *Corduba*, *Hispalis*, *Tarraco* and *Caesaraugusta*, still awaits clear archaeological confirmation. Elsewhere, an earlier date has been suggested for the basilica of *Ilici* (La Alcudia de Elche, Alicante), originating in the mid-4th century (Poveda Navarro 2005, 326), although this may be too early for an urban centre which was not an episcopal see until the 6th century; indeed, a recent re-analysis of the mosaic pavement of the basilica and other materials argues that the 6th century is instead the likeliest date for the construction of this religious building (Tendero Porras and Ronda Femenía 2014).

The impact of Christianity on late Roman urbanism was arguably gradual overall, as was the conversion of the city populations. The first major step was the insertion of episcopal power – a cathedral and

a residence. In cities with late Roman bishops, we see a preference for locating the cathedral and the main episcopal buildings inside the walls, acting as genuine centres of power over the citizens. The substitution – in part – of the ancient municipal power by bishops was translated in the construction of monumental episcopal complexes and the growth of the number of churches (Gurt i Esparraguera and Sánchez 2011). At *Tarraco*, a see from the mid-3th century (Fuctuosus, previously mentioned, was the first documented bishop), in the 6th century, the episcopal complex was transferred to the higher zone of the city and the seat of the ancient *Concilium Provinciae*, using in its construction some of the building materials of the pagan temple *temenos* (Aquilué 1993; Macías Solé 2013). And at *Barcino*, between the end of the 5th and 6th century, the episcopal complex was established in a former domestic and productive space, but using many materials taken from the *forum*, including honorific pedestals. Later, in the 6th century and associated with the bishop Ugnas and his desire for monumentalisation, the construction of the cruciform church of this complex exploited diverse columns and other architectural elements, such as an Augustan period capital (Beltrán de Heredia 2001, 100–101). In addition, we can see often in these episcopal centres a rapid spread of other churches. Thus, the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* names nine churches for *Emerita*, while in *Tarraco*, historical and archaeological sources reveal at least six churches, and three are known for *Toletum* (perhaps a rather low number given that *Toletum* was the capital of the Visigothic Kingdom).

It is also important to recall that, in the 6th century, before the III Council of Toledo, there was a long period of tension between Catholic and Arian communities in *Hispania*, with the Arian presence chiefly among the Visigoths and Suevi. It remains unclear if this tension was evident in terms of church form, location of liturgy[5] – archaeology struggles in this argument (Chavarría Arnau 2017). Although we have problems dating Christian buildings archaeologically before the 6th century, we know from the Council of *Iliberris* and later that many had already been built by the 5th century, and so it is possible that for a while some Catholic churches were adapted to Arian use. Known examples are *Toletum*, where an inscription found close to the current cathedral seems to celebrate the conversion/re-dedication by King Reccared of the church of Santa María – the probable *ecclesia episcopalis* – to Catholic use (Vives 1969, n. 302; Velázquez Soriano 2014); and the possible case of the church of Santa María de Mijangos (Merindad de Cuesta Urria, Burgos), where an epigraph celebrates the consecration of the church during

Reccared's reign (probably between 591 and 602), although the first phase of the building is dated to the 5th century, suggesting that in origin this was an Arian church (Lecanda Esteban 2000, 190–193; Sales Carbonell 2012, 121–125). In *Reccopolis*, by contrast, the church of cruciform plan may have been of Arian denomination from the outset. This case, however, is not common in *Hispania*, since currently we do not know of other Arian-built churches, in contrast to other regions, such as Italy. However, after the period of conflict between Catholic and Arian bishops and elites – although it is difficult to be certain if this situation had any direct correspondence for the rest of the population – the situation and anxieties were resolved with the eventual Catholic dominance and, as a consequence, the rededication of any Arian ecclesiastical structures.

Either way, these new (and old) churches (urban and suburban) were forging a different type of urban fabric and creating a new mode of activity in the urban space, linked to regular services, to festivals for saints, to funerals; undoubtedly, also, citizens will have been impressed by the building activity and the attraction of these places – for worship, for work and also for benefits (such as food for the poor). The Church was in charge of this new topography of power, and this power was reflected back into the growing power of the figure of the bishop.

Transformations in the countryside: a slow or delayed process?

Most researchers agree that Christianity was, at least in its first centuries, preeminently an urban phenomenon. This does not mean that rural contexts were completely impervious to the Christian creed, but it is undeniable that the penetration of the new religion was slower than in the cities and, as a consequence, is delayed also in the archaeological record. However, by *c*. AD 300, the evidence of the Council of *Iliberris* reveals that its canons were relevant only to town-dwellers (*in civitate positus*) – a statement which itself implies that there were also Christians beyond the urban centres. In the I Council of Toledo (397–400), by contrast, the legislation pronounced is for not only urban centres but also places with churches, whether '*castelli aut uicus aut uillae*' – thus including fortresses and villages (Sotomayor 2004).[6]

By *c*. AD 400, the first strong archaeological evidence appears in the landscape, but almost always relate to mosaic decoration and the presence of crismons and crosses in this, as seen in the *villae* of

Fortunatus (Fraga, Huesca) and of Prado (Valladolid), and also to finely crafted sarcophagi (Sotomayor 1973; Ripoll López 1993); combined, such evidence undoubtedly connects these first manifestations with the rural aristocracy. In fact, over many decades, this elite appears fundamental in the Christianisation of the landscape. Nevertheless, the traditional relationship between such elites and the construction of rural oratories and chapels as adherents and patrons has been recently re-evaluated by Chavarría Arnau (2007b), who argues that almost every religious construction found at and over ancient *villae* were later in date, built when the aristocratic residential character had long vanished from these complexes. Indeed, only the cited case of the *villa* of Fortunatus can be identified securely as a still active elite residence when the oratory was built there.[7] Yet some caution is needed: while the monumental grandeur of some *villae* certainly fell away, we cannot exclude that elites still owned these part-ruinous sites (and, indeed, their estates) when such oratories and chapels appear at them. Or maybe, as Christie (2006, 443–445) has suggested, some such sites were donated to the Church at some point.

This process, however, rarely happened before the 6th century, when the textual sources begin to relate the construction of churches by a secular aristocracy; this activity was intensified during the 7th century. It is noticeable that the Hispanic Church Councils never make mention of churches built in the countryside by bishops; in contrast, there are references about lay elites and churches, as at the Council of Lérida (AD 546; *can.* 3), the II Council of Braga (572; *can.* 5), the IV Council of Toledo (633), where we specifically hear that there were many believers who built churches[8] (*can.* 33), and the III Council of Zaragoza (691; *can.* 1) – to name just the best known ones (Sotomayor 2004). Accordingly, therefore, we need to recognise the secular elites (plus monastic groups – see below) as the key figures in the Christianisation process of the rural contexts. Even so, it is important to note that any such churches – as implied in the council minutes – will have needed to be consecrated by the bishop of the related territorial jurisdiction; in effect, they were under at least nominal episcopal control. Perhaps only a few *oratoria* lay outside their control, because these spaces were created, as their title implies, primarily for private prayer.

Another facet of rural religion is evident from late imperial legal dispositions: Book 16 of the *Codex Theodosianus* lists various laws referring to bans of heretical practices as well as of private practices; these issues are still highlighted in the Hispanic Council records – at least, after the Council of *Iliberris* – which indicate how it was the

responsibility of landowners to control and modify the religious practices of their dependants. At the III Council of Toledo this situation is stressed, showing that, by the end of the 6th century, a rigid observance of the behaviour of peasants was required, since they often pursued pagan rites, magic and other kinds of superstitions (cf. Díaz Martínez 2007, 556–558). Despite this, the (admittedly limited) historical sources imply that rural paganism was never severely combated in the Iberic lands, unlike in *Gallia*, where tough campaigns are reported such as in the 370s/380s by bishop Martin of Tours and with others known in the 6th century by Caesarius of Arles. Only at the end of this century, in *Hispania*, do we get some such information, above all for the North-West regions, such as the writings of St Martin of Braga, notably *De correctione rusticorum*, and in the 7th century, the ascetic hermit Valerius of Bierzo mentions the destruction of a pagan altar up on a high mountain.

Archaeology struggles to identify either these anti-pagan activities or the claimed ongoing pagan practices in the countryside. Potentially a good place to look will be the *villae*. As Chavarría Arnau (2015, 34–35) explains, a notable problem faced in research is the confusion established between the existence at or near some *villae* of some *mausolea*, dated to the 4th and 5th centuries – which have been too swiftly identified as Christian buildings (Bowes 2005) – and the appearance of medieval churches over the sites of ancient *villae*, above all in the north-west of the Peninsula and on the Catalan coast, for which an intermediate late antique church stage is claimed.

For example, we cannot be certain of the religious affiliation of the original builders and owners of the *mausolea* of the *villae* of La Alberca (Murcia) and La Cocosa (Badajoz); however, in a second phase at La Cocosa, probably between the 6th and 7th century, the *mausoleum* was replaced by a church, marked by a baptismal pool and an altar (Sastre de Diego 2005). Fairly close also to *Emerita*, *c.* 100 km distant, the *villa* of La Sevillana was still active into the 5th century; but between then and the 7th century, *c.* 500 m away from the *pars urbana*, a cult building was built, containing a baptismal font, while a small necropolis developed over the Roman complex (Aguilar Sáenz and Guichard 1993). Also in the *Lusitania* province, scrutiny of the stratigraphy shows that at the *villa* of El Saucedo the residential area was abandoned and probably in ruins when a first place of worship was built. This endured until the earliest 8th century, when a major fire, dated by a coin of King Witiza (702–710),[9] destroyed it (Bendala Galán *et al.* 1998). In all of the above cases, one could argue that there is no clear connection between the (final, late Roman) aristocratic use

of the *villae* and the establishment of the Christian buildings; rather, it is much more likely to claim a period of abandonment between.

An interesting example is the noted site of Carranque (Toledo), where a *villa*, a temple and a Christian complex with mausoleum and basilica were identified (Fernández Galiano 2001, 27–34). It has even been suggested that the owner of this *villa* was Maternus Cynegius, a prominent Christian person in the Theodosian court, although most scholars reject this claim (Arce 1986; 2003; Chavarría Arnau 2007a, 44–47). In some cases, we might identify a Christian owner, but not, necessarily, with a related Christianisation of the villa landscape. In the octagonal mausoleum at Las Vegas de Pueblanueva (Talavera de la Reina, Toledo), where no associated *villa* has yet been identified, three sarcophagi were uncovered, one of which featured a sculpted image of Christ and the Apostles, dated to the second half of the 4th century; the mausoleum perhaps continued in use into the Visigothic period, but there is no indication this space was also used as a liturgical space, for mass.

Apart from these 'Christian' constructions over *villae*, another kind of building, far less numerous, were *martyria*, these erected usually without association with any preceding structures. In many cases, these arose near or just outside urban centres, such as St Eulalia in *Emerita*. An emblematic case is Marialba (Hauschild 1968; Martínez Peñín 2007), close to León, but *c*. 8 km distant, on a secondary route to the town. This was a rectangular building with apse dated to the second half of the 4th century, while in the 5th century a narthex and three niches in the apse were added, these niches for 13 entombments, which have been connected to the documented 13 martyrs-soldiers of *Legio*. However, we are still ignorant about who those martyrs were. They may have included the centurion Marcellus – later patron saint of Leon – and his 12 sons; but the iconographic 'cluster' formed between San Marcellus and 12 more martyrs is not documented until the 13th century, so it seems impossible that those were San Marcellus and his family (Viñayo 1970).

Compared to other Mediterranean regions, such as Italy, the Christianisation of the Iberian countryside appears delayed, coming at a clearly later date, from *c.* AD 500 onwards and characterised by rather small scale-constructions, an absence of baptisteries in many cases but a presence of tombs – all pointing mainly to private foundations (a useful catalogue is given in Utrero Agudo 2006).

How might we explain this phase of building? It comes after many villas have failed, but at a time when the Visigothic Kingdom starts to put down firmer roots. The 6th century is when, certainly, we see

building works reviving in urban centres, such as *Emerita* and *Barcino*, and this would be reflected in a more stable countryside. The development of churches in rural contexts, almost always in the *territoria* of important cities, was probably related, furthermore, to the political reorganisation of the kingdom and its emergent, but soon intimate, relationship with the episcopal organisation, as evident from the III Council of Toledo. An important example of this is emerging at the archaeological site of Guarrazar (Rojas *et al.* 2017), famous for the 'treasure' found in by the mid-19th century and comprising 26 votive crowns and gold crosses that had originally been offered by various of the 7th-century Visigothic kings, such as Recceswinth and Swinthila (Fig. 18). Until recently the site was unexplored, even though it is located just 10 km from Toledo, very close to the road that linked the capital of the kingdom with *Emerita*. Currently, it is difficult to establish a secure functionality for this site, but there is no doubt that it was a very important suburban complex, featuring a building of 'L' shape and a basilica. Fine architectural materials have been recovered, some of them *in situ*, such as the base of two marble columns *c.* 4 m high. These results, plus the impressive treasure, suggest a major site of cult of the Visigothic realm. Indeed, it has been proposed (Velázquez Soriano 2001, 332; Rojas *et al.* 2017) that this was a monastery (see below about these), one of many established in the territory of *Toletum* (some only known from literary sources, see García Moreno 2007), including the well-studied case of Santa María de Melque, all noticeably set close to the main roadways that connected the *urbs regia* with other cities.

Figure 18. Votive crown of the King Recceswinth (649–672), made of gold and precious stones (image courtesy of Museo Arqueológico Nacional. Photo: Santiago Relanzón, Fundación ITMA).

Apart from monasteries, the growing relevance of the elite in the kingdom and the management of their rural properties are fundamental for understanding why in the 6th century and the next one there seems to be a 'explosion' of buildings for worship, evident both on the ground and through textual and epigraphic guides. In the *Toletum* territory, we can mention recent projects at San Pedro de la Mata – a cruciform church built in the second half of the 7th century (Utrero Agudo 2017) – and Los Hitos – a rectangular structure with external buttresses, in whose interior a group of graves has been documented (Barroso *et al.* 2017). However, of the religious structures, we do not know whether they were part of a monastic complex or for a rural community, whether they were private churches or constructed to control (politically, fiscally, etc.) a group of villages and hamlets. It is interesting, however, that the number of such cult buildings, currently isolated in the landscape, is especially high for the territory of *Toletum*, but this is not comparable to all of the Peninsula, because nowhere else do we see this same density of churches in the territory of the main cities. Probably the fact that we are referring to the *sedes regia*, where the king and his clique of

magnates and nobles lived or, at least, were present, is not trivial, and the economic resources of this area were important if compared with other peninsular spaces – or maybe there was a greater interest to make evident elite deeds.

Nonetheless, many councils reveal some reluctance on the part of the Church authorities towards private churches, because in many cases they remained – or, at least, some proprietors tried to force these circumstances – outside of episcopal control. This situation was resolved at the III Council of Toledo, when the relationship between Church and aristocracy was clarified, keeping the ecclesiastical authority at the top of the pyramid, with the nobility and their private churches thus under its control. Meanwhile, however, these nobles had a growing role at these councils, to which they also subscribed; hence, perhaps, their growing interest in founding churches and monasteries from the end of the 6th century and into the 7th.

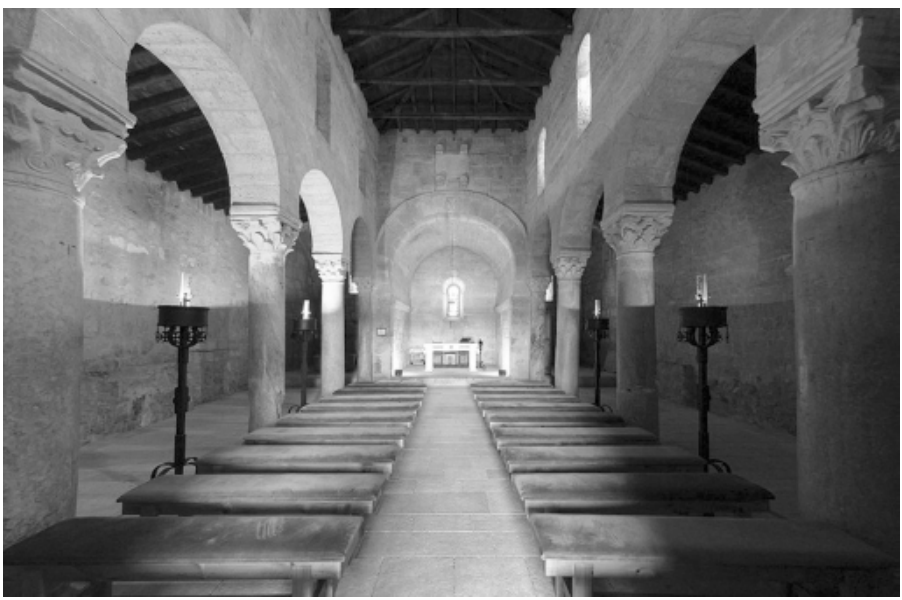

Figure 19. Interior of the 7th-century Visigothic church of San Juan de Baños (image by P. Diarte-Blasco).

Nevertheless, before, between the 4th and 5th centuries, we might anticipate that a number of rural churches were established as a collaboration between bishops and rural landlords, who had interests in the evangelisation/conversion of the *rustici* ('peasants') (see, recently, Chavarría Arnau 2015). At a later stage, between the 6th and 8th centuries, when a primary network of rural churches was already

established, other possibilities perhaps arose, such as the construction of churches by private owners for funerary purposes.[10] Good examples of this activity are the churches of El Gatillo and Ibahernando, both in the province of Cáceres, which date from *c.* AD 500 onwards. Both were small but had numerous burials. Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, some of these funerary churches evolved into a Eucharistic space, but not always. However, at the same time that these small churches were being built, bigger constructions were erected, probably as focal point of cult and as a meeting points for farming groups dispersed in the territory. Thus, close to *Emerita*, at Casa Herrera (Badajoz), a larger church with a quite elaborate architectural design (with two apses and a connecting corridor) and a complex liturgical organisation, probably fulfilled this role (on these churches, see Mateos Cruz and Caballero Zoreda 2003).

The churches of San Juan de Baños (Palencia; Fig. 19), Melque (Toledo), Quintanilla de las Viñas and Mijangos (both in Burgos) are all splendid 7th-century examples of this architecture (Chavarría Arnau 2010); they have related tombs, often monumental, likely reflecting privileged burials of the elites and their families. We must not assume they were all near lay properties; some might have had monastic connections. Such issues of landholding, display and Church presences might be clarified in the future by intensifying our archaeological survey and excavation activity and through analysis of small finds.

Monks and monasteries in the late antique Hispanic landscape

Another essential ingredient in the so-called Christianisation of the landscape is the presence of monks, whether as hermits or in communities. These are indeed attested, but in uncertain numbers. However, we must first observe a monastic tradition in the cities (García Moreno 1993), specifically in their *suburbia*, such as the cited examples of *Emerita* and *Tarraco*. The latter possesses probably the first coenobitic complex known in *Hispania*, built in the first decades of the 5th century; this complex, labelled ‘of the Parque Central’, was located just 200 m from the necropolis of Francolí and had an important function in terms of hosting and assisting pilgrims and travellers – in line with the roles of Eastern monasticism. It is formed by a large basilica with three naves – the interior of this building was covered in part by a necropolis – and an atrium with rooms along their sides. The atrium opens directly to the road, supporting the idea

of serving pilgrims and people in general. Close to these, functional buildings such as a press and a store have been identified (Mar and Salom 1999, 175–177; López Vilar 2006, 109–121).

Nevertheless, although monasticism is attested earlier in other Western provinces, notably Italy and France, in the Iberian Peninsula the first tangible signs of rural monasticism are anchored in the 6th century. Some scattered information about this phenomenon does come in the 5th century, but the turbulence of that century prevented the normal or anticipated evolution of this process. Nonetheless, we do hear of some *monachoi* in the late 4th century in a letter of AD 385 from Pope Siricius to bishop Himerius of Tarragona, advising on corrections of the behaviour of some wayward monks; and in the epistle of the Galician monk Bachiarius in 410, who tried to convince the local abbot to re-admit a monk who had previously left the monastery to live with a nun (Martínez Tejera 2013, 1115). In these early stages, Hispanic monasticism was seemingly more one of isolated cases and atypical (Teja Caruso 1989; Azkarate Garai-Olaun 1991), and something not well received by the Church hierarchies, as suggested at the I Council of Zaragoza (380), whose second canon condemns those Christians who were 'hiding in the mountains' ('*latibula* […] *ac montium*').

There is an interesting coincidence between the strengthening or growth of monasticism in the 6th century, the arrival and stable settlement of the Visigoths and a notable input from the Gallic Church: signs of all of these are evident in the minutes of various Councils, such as those of Tarragona (AD 516), at which the activities of monks and the obedience to the abbot was regulated by prescriptions emanating from the Frankish Church, and Lérida (546), where monks were required to follow the canon of the Councils of Agde and Orleans. Other types of influence might be recognised: for example, from the East, the origin of the first coenobitic (communal) and anchoritic monastic movements; from North Africa – according to Idelfonsus of Toledo, the North African monk Donatus brought to the Iberian Peninsula the habit of applying a set Rule to the monasteries; and, potentially, albeit to a lesser extent, a Celtic influence, evident in some monasteries in the North-West of the Peninsula, which seem to have pursued more austere Rules (for an overview of these influences, see Díaz Martínez 2007, 568–574). The North-West differs from other zones, probably because of the limited number of towns to act as foci for the promotion of Christianisation; hence we might assume the development of monasteries here was significant, and yet, numbers remained low even in the 7th century (Díaz Martínez 1990).

We should stress that monasticism in this period was in still in its early stages and some distance away from our concept of life in an enclosed community as prevailed in the full Middle Ages. Autonomy and separation marked the first phenomenon of monasticism, which was the anchoretic one,[11] which had arisen in the eastern Mediterranean world, probably in Egypt and Syria, already in the 3rd century. By the early 4th century the coenobitic model had emerged and taken hold in this area, and this was, without doubt, the monastic form that reached the Western Empire (see below for the differences between these monks, according to Isidore of Seville). From the outset, all involved a diverse social and economic arrangement and a – still uncertain – relationship with landholders, *rustici* and nobility. Indeed, one issue is who granted or donated lands to these groups? How were they formed? Were most monks locals or did monks come from far away? Did a landowner give a site, lands, but also workers to help?

In this regard, our textual sources give some indication of relationships with bishops and the urban Church, with the Church Councils identifying the monks' spiritual and doctrinal submission to the bishop. This pre-eminent role of the bishop is clear from the fact that, in order to establish a monastery, his approval was required, as noted by the Council of Lérida. This may not always have been a happy relationship, and a degree of confrontation emerges in the cases of Valerius of Bierzo (*Ordo Quaerimonie.*) – who called the bishop of León, Isidore, as *pestilentissimum virus* – and, a century before, St Emilianus (see below), with their respective bishops. Indeed, bishops always tried to channel those monks and their followers into the ecclesiastic order.

However, there were islands of autonomy for these monasteries, such as the maintenance of their own assets (attested in the Ilerdense Council), which probably meant that monasteries were wholly exempt from payment of the episcopal tax, which had been paid by all rural churches to the local/nearest bishop since the Council of Tarragona (AD 516). Monasteries were in reality patrimonial units, as seen in the cited donation and will of Vicente of Asán[12] in which properties in the Pyrenean area of Huesca, and in the territories of Zaragoza and Lérida, were gifted to the monastery he supported. Díaz Martínez (2007, 574–576) has pointed out that the monasteries, following late Roman tradition, worked as *villae*, with a comparable economic and social organisation. They frequently appear to have had properties in both the rural and urban sphere; for example, in the II Council of Sevilla (619), under Isidore, we see how nunneries of the *Baetica* held

properties in both contexts; the same seems true in *Lusitania*, if we believe the wording of the *Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium*.

But we are also made aware that, sometimes, a bishop's involvement could be excessive, as attested in many Councils, such as the IV (AD 633) and the X of Toledo (656), at which it was necessary to legislate to avoid episcopal abuses, such as the misappropriation of monastic goods, the misuse of monks as virtual slaves or the imposition of relatives as abbots (Martínez Díez 1959; Sotomayor 2004).

This relationship will not always have been so complicated, since there were many bishops who actually were originally monks – the highest expression of this communication might be seen in the consolidation of the Abbey of Dume, in the *Gallaecia* region and close to Braga, as a bishopric. Fundamental to monastic expansion in this area in the 6th and 7th centuries was again the figure of Martin of Braga, who was metropolitan bishop of the *conventus Bracarensis* and the bishop-abbot of Dume; he was also the main protagonist in the conversion to Catholicism of the Suevic monarchy (Ferreiro 1981; Díaz Martínez 1990). It is very noticeable that the principal monastic texts were composed by bishops, including Martin of Braga and John of Biclar in the 6th century, and Fructuosus of Braga and Isidore of Seville in the 7th century.

It is from Isidore (*Etym*. VII, 13) that we hear that monks who lived in a community should follow the guidance of an *ordo monasticus* or a *regula*. Isidore also highlights that, apart from the anchorite and the coenobitic monk, another type of monk was the hermit, who, unlike the anchorite, had no previous coenobitic experience; as we will see, hermits seem to have been fairly widespread as a phenomenon in *Hispania* (Díaz y Díaz 1955; Martínez Tejera 2013). It appears that hermits and anchorites were always the most problematic, with the bishops considering these (or some of these at least) as dishonest and non-conforming. A good example is the famous hermit (and saint) Emilianus, who was bound, against his will, to accept a formal ecclesiastical post, being designated a presbyter (of the church at Berceo) by the bishop of Tarazona, Didymus – luckily for Emilianus, this was only for a short while (but with enough time to distribute the goods of this church among the most needy), before the post was removed and he returned to his oratory to end his days (*VSA*. V, 12; VI, 13; Lopez Campuzano 1990; Ortíz García 1993).

The survival until today[13] of the *oratorium* of Emilianus, traced thanks to archaeology and the cited *Vita Sancti Aemiliani*, is a clear sign of the continuity of this specific *locus* as a spatial and spiritual

reference point in the territory, being subsequently occupied by the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla (La Rioja) (Castellanos 1996). From the 10th century, San Millán de la Cogolla underwent a notable expansion, making it one of the most important monasteries of the Iberian Peninsula. Unfortunately, we do not know if it was active still under Arab rule, because this area from the first decades of the 8th century lay under the control of the Banu Qasi dynasty.

Although we must be aware of potential bias and exaggeration in the account related to St Emilianus, the image presented is that of a respected holy man playing a key role in bringing some order to the landscape of the Upper Ebro River. In fact, we find some possible comparison in the North-West of the Peninsula, where (in the 7th century) the nobleman and hermit Fructuosus founded many monasteries (20 or so), including the *coenobium* Complutense and a humble *oratorium* of St Peter, which, in time, developed into the monastery of San Pedro y San Pablo de Montes, in Montes de Valdueza (León) (Martínez Tejera 2007). In both cases, one can picture these hermits – clearly not hidden away from sight – attracting interest and followers in the neighbouring rural districts, as well as, no doubt, bringing to these holy men food and other goods to help them in their prayers and work. Such devotion may well have generated some jealousy on the part of bishops and other ecclesiastical hierarchies.

Where were these hermits to be found? While some are known, the main issue is in dating them. Their retreats were often characterised by habitats in natural environments, usually in caves, and sometimes in territories that can be considered frontier areas. Theses spaces were in most cases very small and modest, probably built to accommodate only one person. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind, as Isidore (*Etym.* XV, 4–5) recalled, that the term monastery, from the Greek '*monos*' and '*sterion*', points to the residence of just one person. However, in many cases the primitive solitary habitat generated another kind of organisation called *laurae* or *lavrae*, in which, because of the significance of a holy man, many monks tried to live close to him and in the same place, creating something similar to a village of monks, configured by a multitude of individual spaces – usually in caves and/or as modest structures in timber and clay (for an overview of these constructions, see Martínez Tejera 2007). Such is the origin of the noted monastery of San Millán, a space initially occupied only by St Emilianus and then converted into a 'laura', with chambers for the housing, places for storage and an *oratorium*, in which the saint was entombed. Afterwards, this space evolved into a real *cenobium*, whose

church was consecrated in the year 984.

Another interesting example is formed by the first phases of the Servitanus monastery, built very close to the then almost abandoned Roman city of *Ercavica* (Cuenca). Here, the community of the North African monk Donatus was established as a 'laura', organised around an *oratorium*, in which Donatus was buried in the 580s AD (Barroso and Morín 2003). This hermitage was monumentalised by the midto late 7th century, thanks to the financial contribution of a noblewoman called Minicea; physically, the builders exploited construction materials from the nearby ruinous city.

As seen, it was not unusual for some of these places to evolve into more elaborate structures, creating proper coenobitic complexes; in other cases, such communal centres arose without any preceding hermit phase, directly developing as a space for a religious community. These spaces evolved especially from the second half of the 6th century, with the model consolidated in the 7th century, when monasticism acquired a higher reputation and, in some way, a normalisation (Díaz Martínez 2006). However, despite textual sources naming many monasteries, actually finding some of these is problematic, and, thus far, archaeology has been able to document only *c.* 30 complexes in the Iberian Peninsula. We still rely in part on the monastic Rules, which tell us of the main components of these constructions, such as the *ecclesia*, *dormitorium*, c*ellarium*, *horreum* and *scriptorium*; rarely can we pin down such functions to specific buildings, since, normally, we can identify only the main building and some of the annexes and land around. In fact, the few cases known seem to show how 'planning' of these sites was highly diverse and much less influenced by their Rule than might be supposed (cf. Bango Torviso 2007).

Figure 20. The 7th-century church of Santa María de Melque (image by P. Diarte-Blasco).

In general, in the few cases known, it is possible to recognise how these complexes were physically enclosed; thus, for example, at Santa María de Melque (San Martín de Montalbán, Toledo), a monastery dated to the 7th century (Fig. 20), a wall enclosed an area of 650 × 400 m (Caballero Zoreda 2006), and at San Miguel de los Fresnos (Fregenal de la Sierra, Badajoz) the enclosure or precinct was *c.* 120 × 60 m, while numerous walls of different buildings annexed to the church were also traced (Berrocal and Caso Amador 1991). In theory, within the precinct, the community had everything for self-sufficiency, with spaces for vegetable and fruit farming (*hortus*) and storage (notably a *horreum* or granary), with a related mill, the so-called *pistrinum*; mills normally were water-driven, however, and might lie outside the enclosure, set on a watercourse. Warehousing was fundamental for these communities and areas were specifically set aside for these activities; for example, the nunnery of Punta de l'Illa de Cullera featured an uncluttered single nave building, away from the cult area, which was found on excavation to be full of amphorae (these containing wine and oil residues – the wine presumably for services, the oil for lighting of lamps) (Llobregat 1977; Roselló Mesquida 1995). In general, the identification of the *hortus* is difficult, but at Santa María de Melque the dams for irrigation and intramural cultivable spaces were traced (Caballero Zoreda and Fernández Mier 1999; Caballero Zoreda 2006).

Besides these essential daily activities and concerns, texts report

that (some at least) 6th- and 7th-century monasteries also had a *schola* and *bibliotheca* as spaces for teaching, learning and copying of texts, although we do not know if these were in their own building or were integrated in other rooms. In this era the Church was one of the main institutions of literacy (probably the most important one), producing texts, manuscripts and other documents, and one might assume that bishops gave monasteries the executor role for the production and transmission of books (these comprising, for example, copies of gospel books as well as saints' lives). The process of manufacturing parchment in monasteries – an activity closely linked to the need for stocks of livestock (*e.g.* calves for vellum) and to transhumance – is documented in the Middle Ages, but we have no secure information about this in Late Antiquity; presumably monks oversaw these tasks, as well as many other craft activities, although the complex and messy process for skinning animals and producing skins for use in book production might have been allocated to an associated rural estate or village. So far, only at the probable monastery of El Bovalar have traces been recovered of leatherworking and specifically of parchment production, revealed via some small related tools – these all found in a room annexed to the basilica (Sales Carbonell 2013). Very close to this site, indeed, between the episcopal sees of *Ilerda* and *Vregllum*, eight palaeochristian sites have been identified (from south to north): Morulls (Os de Balaguer), Santa Cecilia de Torreblanca (Ponts), Santa Maria del Pla, Santa Coloma and Santa Maria la Vella (all three in Ager), Sant Marti de les Tombetes (Sant Esteve de la Sarga), Santa Cecilia dels Altimiris (also located in Sant Esteve de la Sarga; interestingly, the manufacture of aromatic resins and of medicines is documented at this monastery – see Sales Carbonell *et al.* 2017) and Embassament de Sant Antoni (Tremp). At least three of these – Morulls, Santa Cecilia dels Altimiris and Sant Marti de les Tombetes – and perhaps also Santa Coloma along with Santa Maria del Pla, can be considered as monastic, set on an important transhumance route, reinforcing the idea of monasteries exploiting and even developing local and wider economic systems alongside their role of disseminating Christian practice (Sales Carbonell and Salazar Ortiz 2013). Furthermore, such evidence helps to show how monasticism, often assumed to be enclosed and autonomous, was a further element of social display, included in the mechanisms of production and consumption.

The Iberian Peninsula as a new Christian environment?

In this way, monasteries became distinctive parts of a post-villa Hispanic rural landscape, but only, it seems, after a period when the Church and bishops made some small inroads into the countryside and after a scattering of hermits sought natural retreats. By *c.* AD 600–625 we might claim that monasteries were an organising mechanism in the landscape, integrating religious practice and prayer with economic activity. Those, together with the slowly growing number of rural churches, configured landmarks in the territories in which they were established, creating presumably a 'symbolic' or 'ritual' presence in the landscape, very different to the Roman past, where secular estate affairs and intensive agriculture had dominated.

But it is very clear – as shown elsewhere in this book – that monastic and Church spaces and structures were not dominant in this new reality, since the landscape featured many villages, farms, hilltop sites and so on that point to numerous farmers, some Hispano-Roman in origin and others related to the new Visigothic or Suevic population groups and to elites. We remain uncertain of the relationships between all of these – whether monasteries had dependent villages and farmers, whether elites in nearby towns were donors of lands for these monasteries, how far monasteries did achieve self-sufficiency or how far they still looked to wider markets for materials. It was this interrelationship between these different spheres that created a changed organisation to the landscape.

Unfortunately, as seen, it is also very difficult to relate the rural churches to a specific village, hamlet and/or other type of property, and although in many cases these religious units seem to have occupied 'strategic' positions, for example in terms of proximity to communication routes, it is currently almost impossible to establish the reasoning behind these site choices, even though they must have chosen some 'sanctioned' and donated land. In addition, we have little information about who oversaw these churches and how many priests served there, or, for that matter, how many people these churches served (we cannot estimate just on the dimensions of a building, since some services may have been outside). After all, even if we accept that the construction of *oratoria* and some churches was a private initiative, it is important to remember that monasteries and rural churches needed to be consecrated by a bishop and so automatically were included in his jurisdiction. However, it is interesting to see a spate of constructions of churches, often with privileged burials but without baptisteries (at least in their original phase), between the final decades of the 6th and 7th centuries, that could be interpreted as denoting a reinforcement of the aristocracies and their properties in

the Visigothic Kingdom. The desire by the elite to be interred on their own land was not an innovation, but to do so within a private religious structure was different; however, while we do not know if the bishop did not approve, the fact that we see such burials in many instances shows that it was not stopped. How these buried patrons and founders were viewed when these churches became community or parish churches is not known.

The rural situation thus contrasts strongly with urban centres and their social and physical Christianisation, where the bishop seems to have been prominent in the strategy for the episcopal and other churches and, perhaps later, in the distribution of burial spaces. His urban role was as spiritual leader but also as diocesan administrator (with staff and other officials) of Church properties and of their economic resources (lands, produce, workers); and it was from the city that the Church's landed patrimony was administered. This patrimony was also the best way to acquire power and social projection: produce, income and rents could be invested in construction of religious buildings, in charity and social assistance and in urban infrastructural works (we assume). Such visible activities enhanced the standing of the bishops in their urban communities, but no doubt they sought ways to project authority in the landscape, too. It was important therefore for the king to work with the bishops via the Councils, since the bishops were intermediaries with the populations, both urban and rural.

The Visigothic Councils, indeed, were a real law-making assembly, a court and, above all, a political institution – in many cases used by kings to legitimise their accession. By the final decades of the 6th century until the dissolution of the kingdom, we can see a mixture/combining of the secular and ecclesiastical administration, which was fundamental to regulate and even to push the progress of the State. The Church, in summary, penetrated all spheres of the Visigothic Kingdom, from the care of the poor to the support of the monarchy, with bishops sometimes as the point of liaison between society and the court/State, at other times working for their own interest, but always as guarantors of social order and thus key to maintaining Church power as a central element for cohesion of Visigothic Spain.

Notes

1 As a result of an error of identification regarding a place called *Iberia*, some early studies claimed Christian communities in the Iberian Peninsula from the 2nd century. However, the text of Irenaeus of Lyon (*Aduersus Haereses*, I. 10) refers in fact to an *Iberia* in the Caucasus, probably located between the modern countries of Georgia and Armenia, not in the Iberian Peninsula.

2 There is no agreement on the exact date of the Council, although it is accepted that it occurred before the Edict of Milan; for the various hypotheses, see Sotomayor 2005; Ramos-Lissón 2005; and Martínez Maza 2007a, 177–179. On the Council and its implications, see the compilations of studies in Sotomayor and Fernández Ubiña 2005.
3 See Chapter 2, p. 18.
4 Even if from the 3rd century, bishops sought land acquisition for the creation of cemeteries.
5 The differences in liturgy were only really related to the mode of baptism.
6 However, as noted, the terminology used in this period differed somewhat from that of the High Empire, and it is difficult to know if they were talking about the 'classical' idea of *villae* (cf. Percival 1976; Tarpin 2002).

7 About this *villa*, see Chapter 4, p. 66.
8 *Multi enim fidelium in amore Christi et martyrum in parrociis episcoporum basilicas construunt, oblationes conscribunt* …
9 The chronology given by coins must be combined with other types of data (especially, from the stratigraphy), because nothing excludes this coin being used for some decades more.
10 Funerary spaces are attested in the countryside already in the Roman Republican period, when many villa and estate owners built personal *mausolea* on their properties.
11 From ancient Greek, *anachōrētḗs*, 'one who has retired from the world', is someone who, for religious reasons, chooses to abandon secular society so as to be able to live an ascetic life, one intensely prayer-oriented.
12 On this will and donation, see chapter 5, pp. 85–86.
13 The monastery of San Millán de Suso ('from above'), and the original *oratorium* in which the saint was buried, is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997.

Chapter 7

Ethnic landscapes? Between natives and incomers

Introduction

The Iberian Peninsula in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages provides an important case study of the entry and settlement of the so-called barbarians into a Roman province and the ensuing interactions with the native/local population. In the case of *Hispania*, we must recognise a complex picture – not just initially – of *gentes* arriving, mingling, establishing themselves, creating their own spaces, building and communicating. Some of these new groups were in the Peninsula for a relatively short time, such as the Vandals and Alans, whereas others were present for much more prolonged periods, such as the Suevi and Visigoths; and into this mix we can add also the presence of Byzantines – or East Romans/imperials. All of these came to live alongside, interacted or else conflicted with what we can call the 'Hispano-Roman population', whose numbers will have been sizeable, and were scattered between towns and countryside. The new groups became territorial powers and had therefore to work with these natives, to fit in with their settlements, to accept their ways of living, belief and law, and yet also to impose and display their authority. As discussed in the previous chapters, in some cases the archaeology and the documents show how the centuries following Rome witness elements of continuity, but far more features of change – in landscape, in living, in display, in ownership and so on. This chapter asks whether these changes were introductions by the 'barbarians' or were consequences of the crystallisation of the incoming powers merging with the existing populations and cultural frame.

But this chapter also asks about the identity of these peoples. How distinctive, how visible, how vocal and how long-lasting were the identities of these groups? Were they homogeneous groups or a

mixture of different people? Were they all quite different? Were Visigoths and Suevi distinct in dress and appearance, for example? Was ethnicity on show? And if so, in what ways and why?

As discussed, after many decades of fractured control within the Peninsula, the end of 6th century marked the dominance of the Visigoths. But these were Visigoths in charge of a much bigger population, the bulk of whom were still called and legally labelled as 'Romans'. Indeed, in *c.* AD 650, the Hispanic elite (secular and religious) was composed of a mix of both Roman and Visigothic lineage (cf. Arce 2005; Wickham 2005, 219–223). The challenge is to explore and understand these societies and to ask if archaeology can trace differences materially. To do this, we question below what we mean by ethnicity and cultural identity.

The concept of 'barbarian' and early medieval ethnicity

In the general context of the so-called Migration Period between the 4th and 5th centuries (see overview in Christie 2011, 51–111), diverse groups of 'barbarians' entered the Roman territories, at varied scales, and either carved out places for themselves or, more often, came to be allocated spaces by the ailing Roman government. *Hispania* saw (or suffered) the entry and settlement of a number of these *gentes* (some 'military' in content, others perhaps a mix of soldiery and civilians): not just Visigoths and Suevi, but also Alans and Vandals. But there are problems in identifying these newcomers 'on the ground', especially in the earliest stages of their arrival and 'bedding down'.

Archaeologically, the focus of study has long been on funerary contexts and on the variety of goods or 'fittings' (brooches, belts, necklaces, etc.), which have been classified as of *Germanic style* (López Quiroga 2004). Indeed, older/traditional studies used those burial grounds with 'Germanic' grave goods as land markers for identifying Visigothic settlements, and for pinpointing a Visigothic territorial 'heartland' that mainly corresponded with the Iberian plateau (Reinhart 1945; Palol 1966). Although archaeological research (and interpretation) has grown significantly in recent years, we still have problems in seeing differences in the Iberian Peninsula, for example, in the settlement pattern, in the form and typology of the domestic units and in the material culture – such as ceramics – of these new groups of people. Indeed, currently, those differences that we have seen in terms of the settlement organisation of the North-West Peninsula, compared to the ancient *Tarraconensis* and to the southern

area of the Peninsula, seem to be related more to geographical and natural resource aspects than to any real cultural/identity characteristics.

We can now observe how the apparent inconsistency between the funerary record and the known settlement areas of Visigoths (for example, we must bear in mind that 'Germanic' or 'Visigothic' grave goods are not yet known from cities used by the Visigoths), most notably at/around the capital of *Toletum* and at *Reccopolis*, has created a new approach to the Visigothic question. The 'Visigothic paradigm' as labelled by A. Jepure (2009), which ties the (strongest physical?) settlement of these people to the Central Plateau based on the necropoleis and their quite distinctive grave goods, is faltering (Collins 2004, 174–186). Thus it is recognised that 'Visigothic' cemeteries appear – admittedly, though, with a less marked intensity – not only within the Central Plateau, but in other parts of the Peninsula, such as in the southern region of Malaga (De Luque 1979), around Pamplona (Mezquíriz Irujo 2004) and also in an area where such grave goods were not previously documented, such as the Catalan littoral (Llinàs Pol *et al*. 2008). Nevertheless, what has become clear in recent years is that many of these cemeteries were in fact associated with peasant villages (Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera 2011) – although, at the same time, there are also villages associated with necropoleis that lack such characteristic goods.

In the current state of knowledge, we need to recognise the limits currently impeding Archaeology from improving our understanding. Yet historians have no better panorama, since the written evidence, limited yet present, is often confusing – for example, the few late Roman historians who provide an external view of the process, proffer simplified images of the socio-political structures of these *gentes* (Pohl 2002, 221–240). Historians have problems identifying which groups of 'barbarians' were moving into and across the Empire, while some were starting to establish themselves in different areas; indeed, the names of some of these peoples/groups appear and disappear in the texts without any clear reason, taking with them stereotypes and contradictions that have their roots in a Roman Republican archetype, in many cases also inherited from the Greek past (cf. Martinez Maza 2015). Attributes such as hairstyles, clothes and armament were used by some ancient historians to describe these groups of people, although there is not always agreement in these: for example, the Ostrogothic historian Jordanes (*Get.* 49) states that the Suevi fought on foot, whereas the imperial court poet Claudianus (*paneg. de III cons. Honorii* vv. 27) described them as mainly fighting mounted.

These attributes were used in different centuries to show the 'otherness' and the threat of these 'non-Romans', with the ethnographic survey of Tacitus' *Germania* a very prominent, Roman mapping of these multiple tribes and groups. Such characteristics were probably not considerations of the 'barbarians' themselves, and currently the value of the descriptive frame provided by the Roman sources is being debated by many authors (e.g. Geary 2002; Pohl 2008; Wood 2008; Maas 2012; Castellanos 2013). Key is a questioning of whether concepts (largely modern) of identity and ethnicity are actually useful for us to understand the human composition, *origo* and traits of these many named peoples.

From the 18th until the 20th century, in fact, these groups were studied and their pasts exploited in many cases as tools for justifying nationalistic interests of (the leaders of) some countries (see Geary 2002; Wood 2008; 2013). This misguided study has, on a number of levels, affected our comprehension of the socio-political dimension of these *gentes* and their identities as distinct groups or communities. For much of the 20th century, Culture-Historical Archaeology tended to put such historical societies into distinct ethnic and cultural groupings, according to their principal material culture markers (fully discussed in Trigger 2006, 211–313). However, during the late 1970s and the 1980s, the Post-Processual theoretical movement in Archaeology sought to give a new image to the idea of ethnic identities, generating interesting debates about the material culture and seeing this not merely as a passive reflection of cultures, but as an active element of construction and negotiation of identities (see, for example, Curta 2007; 2014).

In this context, concepts such as ethnogenesis and ethnic identity were developed (Pohl 1998; 2000) and are today still widely used. Although the concept was used many decades before (Kurt 1893), it was Wenskus (1961, 54–82), who gave an explicative model to the concept and affirmed that, at the close of the Western Roman Empire, these new identities were articulated through discrete aristocratic groups, who ensured the preservation of traditions as the basis of the new/evolving groups; such traditions and identities above all came to legitimise the leadership clusters of the incipient post-Roman states. While the origins, character and social organisation of a majority of these barbarian groups is still a problem that is far from being resolved, most scholars accept that there is no a simple correlation between biological, sociopolitical and cultural identities (*e.g.* Zakrewski 2011). Indeed, there are very few authors who would still view these populations as ethnically homogeneous and culturally

closed.

Yet this does not mean that we cannot move closer to cultural traits via the archaeological record, as some scholars have argued (*e.g.* Brather 2004, 27–28), by underlining the idea that ethnicity is a subjective concept. While it is true that ethnicity is a modern concept, this should not preclude Archaeology using material culture as a route to look for the collective identities as a reflection of social reality, and, consequently, as something fickle and subject to circumstances and contexts (Geary 1983, 15–22). Personally, as I will show in this chapter, I would argue that there is no way to consider ethnic identity and biological group affiliation as two sides of the same coin, but we can at least identify cultural horizons within the archaeological record.

In recent decades, a rereading of the archaeological materials traditionally associated with the groups of *gentes barbarae* has also come under consideration by Spanish scholars (see Quirós Castillo and Castellanos 2015, 26–40), giving the concept of '*Hispania* Visigoda' a chronological character more than an ethnic or cultural one. Analysis is now focused principally on the socio-economic, religious and political structures of the two centuries of the *Regnum Gothorum*, but also recognising the necessity of defining, under the concept of 'Goth', the conformation and identities of these heterogenic groups that reached the Iberian Peninsula in the 5th and 6th centuries. It is important to bear in mind, however, that most of those 'barbarians' settled on Roman territory in the last century of the Western Empire became integrated among the provincial populations and en route will have lost many features of their old identity (Wolfram 2012, 105). The disparities between Romans and non-Romans were no longer, it seems, of significance: the old distinction has 'lost its sharpness and, therefore, the legal and political personal status of *foederatus* was not very dissimilar to the status of the Roman of equal professional and/or social position' (Chrysos 1997, 199). So, what do we mean by a 'Visigoth' or 'Sueve' in the 5th century and later? How might these people be distinguished from others, such as the 'natives/provincials', and how did such relationships change in *Hispania* in the centuries prior to the arrival of the Islamic troops?

The Hispano-Roman background

Most of the population of the Iberian Peninsula, before the arrival of these new *gentes*, were what are labelled as 'Hispano-Roman'; to these can be added some small communities of North Africans, Orientals and Jews, these chiefly based at sites along the Mediterranean coast,

being linked to trade especially. The entry of foreign groups of people from the 5th century did not dramatically change these demographics, but initially there was no intensive process of assimilation or acculturation – indeed, we might recall that, until the reign of Leovigild, marriages between Hispano-Romans and Visigoths were forbidden.

For many decades, the historiography emphasised the critical situation of the Peninsula when the first groups of Vandals, Alans and Suevi crossed the Pyrenees: using the dramatic references in the contemporary texts, the view was of a loss of population in cities through warfare but also with elite groups abandoning the urban centres for a new life in their rural properties. However, this picture has been much revised, thanks to varied archaeological and historical research, which shows how a majority of cities endured without major upheavals to their civic life, whereas the *villae* continued as occasional – yet in many cases opulent – retreats for their elite owners, these sites otherwise occupied by estate managers. In fact, a few cities saw a renaissance at this moment: for example, *Emerita* and *Hispalis*, which became the *sedes regiae*[1] for a short while during the 6th century and which maintained an important role under the Visigoths, or *Barcino*, which in some way wrested from *Tarraco* its role of capital (on the 'shifting capitals', see Velázquez Soriano and Ripoll López 2000; Ripoll López 2000, 377–382). Yet the same period sees some urban centres suffer intense decay, most notably those in the Duero Valley area, but also in other areas of the Peninsula,[2] losing their former administrative or economic functions to other sites in the regions. These declines and even abandonments were not that commonplace. Indeed, the political, administrative, economic, cultural and social functions were maintained within urban sites across most of the Visigothic centuries.

The major difference between this late Roman period and the High Empire was, without doubt, a growing tendency towards the concentration of landowning, creating a privileged social minority, who based their wealth in their large estates, with agriculture core to their income. These privileged groups were at the apex of the social and political pyramid, and, in addition, held the key administrative positions and, in time, many ecclesiastical ones. By birth or by political merits and/or *dignitas*, these people make up the group of *honestiores* (the privileged class of noblemen), comprising also people without any notable administrative or political role, but who might be important merchants or who owned large parcels of lands (and who usually appear named in the texts as *possessores*). The great

landowners also generated new forms of social relations via patronage, which in some ways inaugurated a new relationship with the Roman State in that we see some of these people arming their own workforces or establishing their own militia to protect properties and people (Martínez Maza 2007b, 104–111).

It is probable that the urban oligarchy, the *curiales*, had a more complicated role in this last phase of the Roman Western Empire, being burdened, since Diocletian's reforms of the State, with oversight of the tax collection in both cities and territories. Meanwhile, their weakened economic situation impeded any evergetistic tendencies they might have had; indeed, these practically disappeared.

Besides the *possessores* in the landscape and the *curiales* in the towns, senators still played a role in the imperial administration, and many also owned sizeable rural properties. This group has seen recent reassessment, questioning what spheres of influence were directly managed by the Hispanic senators, but asking also where they were based. Also questioned is whether the arrival of Vandals, Suevi and Alans meant a rapid/immediate or even tangible impact on the late Roman political organisation within the Peninsula (Arce 1999; for example, the *vicarius Hispaniarum* Maurocellus indicates one level of continuity of the Roman administration of *Tarraconensis* until AD 420).

In terms of the bulk of the population, these *humiliores* were composed of farmers, workers, freedmen and slaves (Martínez Maza 2007b, 130–139). We must assume that the difficult economic situation of these late Roman centuries especially affected these people – whose numbers are, of course, very hard to estimate – and it is often claimed that many town-based people were forced to flee the urban centres as a consequence of the fiscal pressure, while those based in the landscape, besides the burden of taxes, suffered loss of freedom as rich estates expanded. For many *rustici*, the relationship of patronage with a rich (Hispano-Roman) landlord or, later, taking refuge among the new *gentes* were the only alternatives. In fact, the definitive consolidation of this situation happened in the Visigothic period with client relationships core to society.

The first entrance of *gentes* and the silent archaeological record

As seen in Chapter 2, after the first arrival of barbarians in AD 409, following an arrangement between these military groups and the usurper *Gerontius* to help the latter against Constantine III, a new

division of the Iberian territory was formulated which meant that the *gentes* were installed in different Peninsular areas (not including the province of *Tarraconensis*). This territorial planning, however, was very brief and the Gothic *foederati* were sent by the Western Roman Emperor as a punitive force; as a result, most of these *gentes* were destroyed, with the exception of some groups of Vandals and the Suevi concentrated in the *Gallaecia* region – an area that seems to have avoided much of the warfare. The Alans were probably removed at the start of the campaigns by the federates. However, the Vandal presence was not fully dealt with, and it was only resolved with their decision to cross over to North Africa – damaging decisively another important Roman territory (Courtois 1955; Arce 2002; 2005, 107–109).

These short-lived presences of Alans and Vandals especially, understandably has a minimal material reflection in the archaeological record as likewise in the textual sources – in fact, when Isidore of Seville wrote his *Historia of Gothorum and Suevorum*, he made no reference to the Alans and their entrance in the Peninsula (Arce 2005, 124–127). Archaeologically, there are perhaps some traces of Vandals in the Peninsula's north-west (König 1981; Lopez Quiroga and Rodriguez Lovelle 1995–1996), but nothing of the Alans yet exists. A group of gold belt buckles with a type of decoration similar to 'cloisonné' (cell-work) found in *Gallaecia* (Köning 1981, 299–360), and a *spatha* discovered in Beja (Portugal) (Raddatz 1959), these all dated to the first half of the 5th century, have been included as part of the 'Vandal horizon'; yet we have no direct information on when and in what context these finds were made. In reality, we cannot exclude that, in this martial and turbulent period, these items belonged to Vandals and/or Suevi, to 'Germanics' in the service of Rome or even to actual Roman troops who, in this period, incorporated what has been called a 'Danubian fashion' in their dress/uniform (Kazanski 1989; 1997).

The Suevic Kingdom (411–585) and its 'unknown' material culture

The first historic mention of the Suevi comes from Julius Caesar (*Bell. Gall*. 1. 31–53), in reference to when Ariovistus invaded Gaul in 72 BC. Subsequently, the name 'Suevi' appears regularly in imperial texts, suggesting that this was a collective name, which included several (sometimes different) groups of Germanic people. Who exactly those groups of Suevi were who entered the Iberian Peninsula cannot be

pinpointed, although it has been argued that they were mainly *Quadi*, along with other minor groups. Either way, they were a 'weaker' and less numerous group compared to the Vandals and Alans, who had crossed the Pyrenees together (*e.g.* Reinhart 1952, 32; Díaz Martínez 2015).

The Suevi evolved from mobile tribal groups to a fixed kingdom based territorially in the Hispanic north-west, establishing their capital in *Bracara* (Díaz Martínez 2000; 2011a, 126–138). They called themselves by their Germanic/Roman cultural name – as suggested by an epitaph of a woman buried in AD 474 at *Hipona* (Annaba, Argelia), recorded as 'Ermengon suaba' (Wagner 1998, 146–147). They probably had long hair, in line with most of the descriptions of the Germanic peoples; indeed, other traits, such as blonde hair and blue eyes, appear as common features of most of the Germanic *gentes*, something noted in the 4th century by the poet Ausonius (*Bis.* 4), who dedicated a poem to his Suevi slave Bissula, describing her 'German face, blue eyed and fair haired' (Pohl 1998, 51–61).

Yet related archaeological material for this people as a distinctive, ethnic group continues to be scarce; indeed, apart from the numismatic evidence (see Barral i Altet 1976), the Suevi are not easily recognised in their own territory. Although some researchers have sought or claimed a specific type of Suevic pottery, most scholars agree that it is very difficult to distinguish such material archaeologically. As with claimed 'Vandal' materials, the very few elements which could be related to the Suevic Kingdom are frequently devoid of context: thus, in 1934, a fibula from Cascabelos (León) was identified as Suevic, yet this has never been considered so since (Zeiss 1934). Similarly, a bone comb found at the hilltop site of Castro Ventosa was labelled 'Suevic', but mainly on the basis of location, not through distinctive type or manufacture (Pérez Rodríguez-Aragón 1996). Attempts to systematise these materials (Peschel 1978) have proved fruitless and, unfortunately, in the current state of knowledge, many of these finds could simply be seen to lie within a general 'Germanic horizon' (López Quiroga 2004, 217–219; Díaz Martínez 2015). In addition, an analysis of the cemeteries dated to the Suevic centuries in their *Regnum* reveals a predominance of burials lacking any kind of goods. Otherwise the only elements that might be seen as distinctive to a Suevic horizon are the 'laudas de estola', high-status tombstones (as claimed by Chamoso Lamas 1965), although these seem to be later in date (Sánchez Sánchez 2000).

Nonetheless, close analysis of the landscape and rural settlement

pattern generates some relevant data. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Hispanic North-West's socioeconomic system was based mainly on farming. With a low number of *civitates* – though Roman cities like *Lucus*, *Bracara* and *Asturica*, and *vici* such as Iria, Vigo, Orense and Tuy did remain very active during these centuries – compared to other parts of the Iberian Peninsula (Pérez Losada 2002), there was a notable creation, from the 4th to 6th centuries, of an interlinked settlement structure based on villages, farms and hamlets, alongside the rise of hilltop settlements – a marked phenomenon across Suevic territory (Pérez Losada 2002, 51; López Quiroga 2006; Sánchez Pardo and Rodríguez Resino 2009).

We can also observe, perhaps surprisingly, an intense commercial relationship especially with the Byzantine world but also with other Atlantic coastal areas. Thanks to imported ceramic finds – such as from North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean – found in excavations at the port of Vigo, we can trace seemingly regular exchanges with the Mediterranean until the mid-7th century, with a peak from the mid-6th (Fernández Fernández, 2010 and 2014). Unfortunately, our information for goods in the Spanish North-West is scarce, even though it has been suggested that traders here perhaps were interested in tin and gold resources. These metals were probably being extracted to a much lesser extent than in the High Empire; however, palaeoenvironmental studies do support an image of continued metal production, evident in the sharp increase in the lead signature – lead being fundamental in the extraction processes – in pollution in the atmosphere in this area for the 6th and 7th centuries (Martínez Cortizas *et al.* 2005). One other proposal is that these exploitations were donations or concessions from the Suevic kings to local elites in exchange for a fee (Sánchez Pardo 2014, 1003–1004).

Nevertheless, overall, available data for Suevic presences are fleeting and/or problematic; while there are trends in terms of settlement and land use, many aspects simply are a continuation of previous patterns. Without distinctive metal finds from burials in particular, we must admit that archaeology currently offers little about the Suevic *gentes*.

The supremacy of the Visigothic Kingdom: archaeological data and misunderstandings

The textual and archaeological record for the Visigoths is, of course, much better than for the Suevi, due chiefly to their longer and much wider presence within the Peninsula, with their kingdom enduring

until the early 8th century. As seen, with different degrees of intensity, these Goths had progressively annexed and occupied different areas, coming to hold a majority of the Hispanic territory.

While we still do not know enough about the 'mechanics' of the arrival of the Goths in the Iberian Peninsula – scale, speed, character and so on – what we do know is that they entered directly from the so-called Kingdom of Tolosa (though scholars argue that this was not a real *regnum* from the outset of their settlement in southern France; see Valverde 2000, 50–51; 2015, 67–68), because they came to *Hispania* with a treaty from the imperial authorities as *foederati* to combat the Vandals and Suevi here. After defeat in Vouillé at the hands of the Franks in AD 507, it is assumed that the Visigoths began a large-scale migration, although potentially some/many of them were already established in the Peninsula (Jepure 2009, 181). In any case, their presence on the other side of the Pyrenean Mountains built to form a kingdom probably from AD 531, when the *sedes regia* was established in *Barcino*. However, only from Leovigild's reign is it possible to talk about the 'Kingdom of Toledo', when this city in the Tajo River valley was consolidated as capital of the *regnum*. It is interesting to observe how the whole Peninsula was considered as a political unit, even before full conquest of the territory, which only happened under King Swinthila in AD 625, when the last Byzantine possessions fell into Visigothic hands. Indeed, the Frankish historian Gregory of Tours already gave the title of *rex Hispaniae/rex Hispaniorum* to Leovigild and Reccared, and thus at a date much earlier than the theoretical identification they had a clear territorial materialisation (Valverde 2000, 157–162).

The usual description of the appearance of Goths recalls the same stereotypes of the Suevi – long fair hair, light-coloured eyes – while their characterisation as terrifying invaders, inherited from a paradigm consolidated in the early Roman Empire, was still evident in the writings of Hydatius, bishop in the 5th century. However, this image of ferocity appears completely absent in texts of the 7th century, whether in texts authored by those with a Gothic origin, such as John of Biclar, or a Hispano-Roman one, such as Julian of Toledo and Isidore of Seville. By the 7th century, in fact, bishop Julian of Toledo made a clear separation between 'foreigners', such as Franks, who lived on the other side of the frontier, and Goths and Hispanics, who were indistinctly named as the subjects of the king of Visigoths – a statement that shows that, by that time, there was no longer any ethnic issue behind this terminology and the terms could be used interchangeably for the kingdom's inhabitants (Valverde 2015). In

addition, it seems that for many, such as Isidore of Seville, Hispano-Roman and Gothic identity were merging into a common Hispanic identity (see Díaz Martínez 2008, 28), even if the name of this land was the *regnum Gothorum*. Furthermore, it is interesting to note how the Byzantines were perceived by Isidore as 'intruders' in the territories of the king of Toledo, seeing no positives for people living in this imperial zone.

The III Council of Toledo and the religious unification it confirmed is recognised as one of the determinant moments in the consolidation of the *Regnum*, whereby Hispano-Romans and Goths shared an ideology and were unified as Catholic subjects. Some scholars (such as Pohl 1998) have argued that, previously, Arianism had been part of a distinction strategy that separated Goths from Romans, but this is now largely rejected.

King Reccared is viewed as acting like and displaying himself as a Roman-Christian emperor at the III Council, using from this moment the appellation *Flavius* (the name adopted by the Constantinian dynasty in the 4th century) as part of his regal title (Díaz y Díaz 1976b, 133–141) – a clear sign that the new monarch saw himself as heir to the old imperial power. This 'inheritance' was also visible in the actual royal throne, in the sceptre and in the use of lavish clothes and attributes, such as the 'imperial purple' and the multi-gem-encrusted diadem – this an image far from that of the early Tolosan kings dressed in furs (Teja Casuso 2002, 119; Valverde 2015).

According to the (few) historical sources, it seems that, more widely, clothes and personal adornment elements were more reflections of social status, than a question of identity. Yet archaeologically it remains complicated to try and identify high or low social status among these *gentes*. Within the Iberian Peninsula, above all in the North-Central Plateau (the *Meseta*), however, the appearance of new and different funerary rituals with grave goods (almost always characterised by personal ornaments), related with a rural population and quite diverse to the native/Roman tradition, has been the core guide for many decades in Visigothic studies. As occurred in other European countries, such studies supported the idea of an evident Germanic ethnicity since the 19th century, although these debates in the Peninsula were less intense than in other regions.

Since the early 20th century, some very important archaeological sites of the Visigothic cultural horizon, mainly funerary contexts, have been explored. The burial grounds – chiefly based on a reading of the funerary goods – were then viewed as indisputable material realisations of a Visigothic presence and, also, a signifier of the core

area of their settlement, supporting the 'Visigoth theory' developed in the 1930s and maintained across the 20th century. This paradigm centres on the idea that such burials were the main expression of the Gothic occupation, the grave goods being considered as cultural markers. The distribution of cemeteries, as Reinhart (1945, 124, 139) pointed out, was concentrated between Toledo, Calatayud and Palencia, forming a sort of triangle in the interior of the Peninsula, with a low density of urban centres of this area supporting the claimed more ruralised character of these populations.

Burial grounds like Carpio de Tajo in Toledo, Castiltierra in Segovia (Fig. 21), Daganzo de Arriba in Madrid and Herra del Pisuerga in Palencia were identified as core of this occupation, spanning the end of the 5th and the end of the 6th century. Scholars such as Martínez Santa Olalla (1934), Zeiss (1934), Werner (1942) and Reinhart, using objects like the large bow-brooches and polychrome belt buckles found in female burials, created a systematic chrono-style division between Gothic, Visigothic and Byzantine periods. Nevertheless, this theory also underlined that Visigothic elites were based in the towns and cities and these cemeteries were associated with rural contexts (Reinhart 1945, 134), with many authors stressing the low quality of many of the grave goods.

This paradigm was revised (although without going too far from its main concepts) already from the 1980s by G. Ripoll López (1985), who gave a topo-chronological character to the funerary elements. Ripoll also proposed a new interpretation of these cemeteries, associating the funerary goods with the upper classes and occasionally with a military aristocracy (Ripoll López 1991). Since then, the 'Visigoth theory' has been constantly revised, and nowadays the traditional view of a highly tangible Germanic presence and its 'cultural markers' is no longer accepted by the majority of scholars. In fact, in the last decade, recognition of the problems that the settlement distribution has in connection with the known funerary contexts has generated a deconstruction of the Visigothic paradigm, avoiding the approaches of cultural historicism. In particular, the absence of such furnished burials in the main towns and capitals of the *Regnum Gothorum*, such as *Toletum*, *Barcino*, *Hispalis* and *Emerita*, or in paradigmatic examples such as *Reccopolis*, the city founded by Leovigild, has generated many unresolved questions. Furthermore, it is now argued that the area where the noted 'Visigothic cemeteries' lie does not tally with the historical sources (Koch 2006): in fact, the *Consularia Caesaraugustana*,[3] composed in the second half of the 6th century and probably the only source that speaks about a 'possible'

large-scale migration at the end of the 5th century, focused the Visigothic occupation in the *Tarraconensis* region, more than any other Iberian area.

Another intriguing issue is that such 'furnished' cemeteries remain completely undetected in the Kingdom of Tolosa (Heather 1996, 203) – a situation that makes no sense if we accept that the Gothic population moved from that area to the Iberian Peninsula. 'Visigothic' burial customs are only prominent materially in the rural contexts of the Central Plateau and in the southern French Mediterranean coastal strip of *Septimania* (James 1980, 236–237; Jepure 2009, 189). Genetic studies, although still scarce in Spain, show interesting data that complicate even further the panorama, because in those cases where isotopic and DNA analysis has been done, such as for the cemeteries of Aldaieta and San Martín de Dulantzi (both in Álava), a foreign origin for the bulk of the deceased has been excluded (Alzuealde *et al.* 2006; Quirós Castillo *et al.* 2013). Admittedly, Aldaieta (Azkarate Garai-Olaun 1999) has been considered not a Visigothic cemetery, because it features many burials with spears and battleaxes – contrasting strongly with a general absence of weapons in most Visigothic burial grounds – and pointing more to links with Merovingian Frankish burials. Indeed, the existence of three cultural groups – with three defining archaeological sites – in the Iberian Peninsula has been proposed by Jepure (2009, 194): (i) Pamplona-Aldaieta, with its many weapons and belt buckles; (ii) Duraton-Madrona, featuring belt buckles with a rectangular polychrome plate in cloisonné, typical in female burials; and (iii) a Carpio de Tajo group, with a lower quality of metalwork in the grave goods.

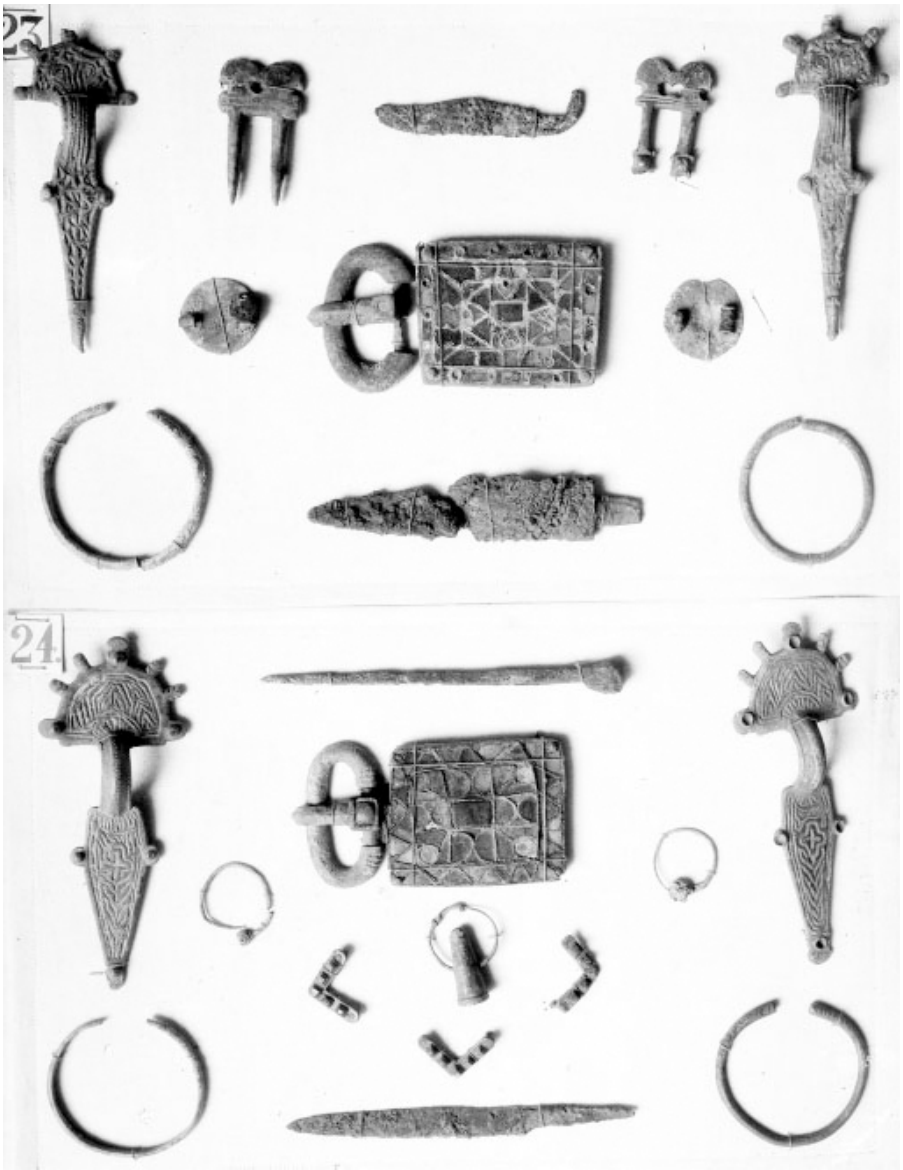

Figure 21. Grave goods from the cemetery of Castiltierra (image courtesy of Museo Arqueológico Nacional).

Putting aside any cultural and stylistic division, a more chronological one has been proposed by Vigil-Escalera (2013, 259–262), although this is, arguably, not always clear in the archaeological record. The first group, dated to the 5th century, 'post-Roman', is defined by ceramics – in many cases *terra sigillata hispánica tardía* – glass jars and personal adornments (such as rings, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, hairpins) in the burials, even in male and child burials;

secondly, the 'Visigothic' one, spanning the end of the 5th century to probably the first half of the 7th century, with distinctive brooches and belt buckles of characteristic *Danubian style*, these found only in female graves; and the last type, 'Hispano-Visigothic', in which the absence of such personal items is the main characteristic (in some way like the minimally furnished Christian-period Roman burials).

So, should we call the changes in burial practice a reflection of new, 'Germanic' people and rites? If Goths and Suevi had become considerably integrated in Roman culture before reaching the Iberian Peninsula, why, then, this differentiation in the burials? Or might this reveal differences in the incoming population groups or decisions by some groups to display differences in death? Alongside this it is important to stress that the majority of cemeteries in the Iberian Peninsula between the 5th and 7th century – but those that get much less academic attention – lack objects of personal adornment, weapons or any kind of goods, and that the 'Visigothic' cemeteries were, comparatively, a minority and almost always concentrated in the region described by Reinhart (1945) a century ago, mainly in the provinces of Segovia, Soria, Valladolid, Madrid, Guadalajara and Toledo.

For a long time, as said, these latter cemeteries have been seen as isolated, but thanks especially to rescue archaeology work (see Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera 2011, 166–167), we can now better recognise that these are in fact often associated with habitats, above all hamlets and villages (suggested already in Ripoll López 1989). Understanding these habitats is crucial, and work in the Madrid region and in the Duero Valley enables us to identify two types of house constructions in these places:[4] those partially excavated in the ground or even into the bedrock (sometimes called *Grubenhäuser* or 'sunken-featured buildings') and those built directly built on the ground. Timber was the main building material, with upright posts and horizontal sill-beam timbers, although it is not unusual to find some houses set on stone plinths. In any case, the domestic constructions of the 6th and 7th centuries over this wide area show innovation in the mode of dwelling, seemingly quite distinct from the previous rural habitats and organisation of the Roman countryside. In an Italian context, it has been suggested (Valenti 2008, 82–84) that the *Grubenhaus* might be related to different, foreign populations; this might also be valid for the Iberian Peninsula, since in five centuries of Roman domination this typology of house was unknown here. However, other scholars (*e.g.* Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera 2006; Quirós Castillo 2011b; Tejerizo García 2014) reject this hypothesis,

arguing that this mode of building is connected with all the other transformations that happened in the countryside, such as the decentralisation of the productive process and the transfer of that to the peasant communities. Furthermore, they point to the presence of these types of timber houses in the Iberian Peninsula in Protohistoric times, specifically in the Chalcolithic period, across the Bronze Age and even into the Iron Age.

Currently, such sunken-featured buildings are known chiefly in the Madrid region, Basque Country and Cataluña, with a scattering in Castilla y León (but with very few known in the south west of the Duero Valley). Apart from possible geological factors (much/no tree cover, or high bedrock, for example), the distribution image available for this kind of habitat is probably related to current administrative and economic issues in connection with the construction industry and rescue archaeology, both seriously affected in recent years by the financial crisis. However, this building type seems absent from the urban contexts, from the hilltop sites and even at the 'recolonised' sites of ancient *villae*; instead, these houses appear chiefly in hamlets and in the newly founded villages, in a timeframe beginning in the 5th century and peaking between the 6th and 8th centuries, but with a clear downward trend subsequently (Tejerizo García 2014). The loss of this typology of construction in the Caliphate period, in my opinion, shows that these sunken-featured buildings were something more than simple structures connected with peasant societies.

So, should we consider, then, that these building forms relate to a different, non-native population? Were these sunken-featured buildings introduced by the Gothic population and then adopted by the Hispano-Romans, who recognised in this type of construction a versatility and ease of construction? Here the problem is that too few settlements have been excavated, too few with long chronologies, and too few with related burial grounds; until we have such large-scale research or rescue investigations we will struggle to provide a clear answer to this ongoing debate of roots/origins and influences.

The brief presence of the Byzantines in the south-eastern Iberian Peninsula

Besides the Suevic Kingdom (AD 411–585), the Visigoths also shared part of the Iberian Peninsula with the Byzantines/East Romans, who maintained a presence in south-east Spain for nearly a century (540s–625). As noted previously, the imperial province of *Spania* was limited to a narrow strip in south-eastern Spain. While it has proven difficult

to determine the precise limits of this area, scholars such as S. Ramallo Asensio and J. Vizcaíno (2002) view the main spaces under Byzantine control as comprising part of the south-eastern and Andalusian coast up to the so-called *fretum gaditanumn*, which corresponds to the area of the current Strait of Gibraltar; but it likely also extended across the Strait to include the town of *Septem* (Ceuta) in North Africa, and eastwards to the Balearic Islands.

Apart from the Justinianic expansion in the central and western Mediterranean Sea as a 'programme' of *renovatio Imperii*, the reasons behind this Byzantine penetration have been much discussed, with some scholars proposing a military need, namely to prevent possible Visigothic initiatives against North Africa and even Italy, or else even a commercial initiative, designed to monopolise trade also in the western part of the Sea. The imperial province in fact lay in what had been one of the most Romanised and urbanised areas of the Peninsula, with its own wealthy elites, engaged no doubt in both politics and commerce. Most scholars agree that *Carthago Spartia* was the Byzantine provincial capital, supported by cities like *Malaca* and *Septem.*

Historically, the archaeology of the Byzantines in the Iberian Peninsula has always been mediated for the relationship with the Visigothic Kingdom, and in particular on Byzantine stylistic influences on the *Regnum* (see the debate in the volume of Caballero Zoreda and Mateos Cruz 2000; plus Olmo-Enciso 1992; Izquierdo Benito 1994). But, fortunately, new data have come from excavations, especially in Cartagena and its territory (Ramallo Asensio and Vizcaíno Sánchez 2002; Vizcaíno Sánchez 2008), as well as in *Septem*, where we know of domestic units, associated with East Mediterranean and North African fine ceramic tablewares (*Late Roman* C), amphorae (Keay LV, LVII, LIII, LXV) and handmade and/or slow wheel-thrown pottery, belonging to the first half of the 6th century. Interestingly, these excavated houses were built with low-quality materials and lacked any decorative elements, although the ceramic repertoire gives some indication of status. We can also note the reference in Procopius to a basilica dedicated at *Septem* to *Theotokos* and built by the *milites* (i.e. the local garrison) (*De Aedificiis*, VI, 7, 14) as well as a citadel (*De Aedificiis*, VI, 7, 16); neither construction has been securely identified, although some related archaeological traces are claimed (cf. Bernal Casasola and Pérez Rivera 2000, 131). Unfortunately, our knowledge about the religious architecture in this area is very scarce and, at the moment, it is virtually impossible to see clear differences between the Visigothic area and the Byzantine one. Those structures in the *Spania*

region seem to be similar to those built in Visigothic territory but, by contrast, different to those in Byzantine Africa, where characteristics, such as the altar in front of the apse – as opposed to inside the apse in Iberian examples – point to different choices (Vizcaino Sánchez 2007, 432–437).

Certainly, we should not think of the Byzantine territory as impermeable, since Byzantine artistic/stylistic influences extended beyond even the Baetic mountain range; we can note also Byzantine coins found in many parts of the Guadalquivir Valley (Marot 1997). However, most of our data are concentrated in the contiguous regions of Cádiz and Málaga, where pottery levels again might point to imperial troop presences. In *Malaca* and its territory, we can also note a striking presence of *Late Roman unguentaria* – these objects absent in contrast in Visigothic spaces – which let us recognise commercial contacts with Eastern Mediterranean regions, Gallia and North Africa (Serrano Ramos 1993, 83–111) and even the existence of a colony of eastern merchants, also documented via epigraphic records (García Moreno 1972, 135–136). The dynamism of this city in this period is archaeologically evident; we can also trace here a maintenance of Hispano-Roman funerary practice/rituals in terms of location, tomb typology and a lack of grave goods (Corrales Aguilar and Mora Serrano 2005, 133). Meanwhile, in the Malaga countryside, some *villae* show important levels of continuity, with a stable occupation until the 6th or even the beginning of the 7th century,[5] such as Las Viñas (Cuevas de Becerro), Portones de Puebla and Cerro de la Virgen (Antequera), Cerrillo Sánchez (Sierra Yegua), Peñón de Solía (Villanueva del Rosario), Cerro de la Fuente (Mollina) and the settlement of El Campillo (Almogía) (Corrales Aguilar 2007b).

The core of the imperial province of *Spania* included the southern area of the *Carthaginensis*, the current provinces of Granada, Almería, Murcia, Alicante and, perhaps for a while, Albacete. The coastal line comprised the capital, *Carthago Spartia* and other urban centres, but the situation is less clear further inland as we cannot be certain where the frontier lay and if this changed much; as a result, some towns and forts may have changed hands. Towns such as Mula, *Begastri* and el Tolmo de Minateda may have been Byzantine until the last part of the 6th century. It is interesting to note how an archaeological marker such as the 'liriform' ('lyre-like') belt buckle has been used to show the Visigothic presence in this area, being found in a few towns, for example, but being wholly absent from the capital and its hinterland. However, this absence seems more related to the historical path – the development of the Byzantine–Visigothic War and the destruction and

almost complete abandonment, as Isidore informs us (*Etym.* XV, 1, 67–68), of *Carthago Spartia* in *c*. 623/625, by the forces of King Swinthila – than for other reasons, since this kind of liriform belt buckle has also been found in contexts in *Septem* and the Balearics (Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007, 195–196).

The choice of *Carthago Spartia* as imperial capital and military headquarters was due to its strategic position and its previous role as both provincial capital and metropolitan episcopal see. The urban space had a disaggregated plan, with an intensive occupation in the hills of Concepción and Despeñaperros; particularly well known via archaeology is the 'Byzantine quarter' built over the structures of the ancient theatre, in which houses had a central courtyard and two or three rooms; some rooms were used as storage spaces for wine and amphorae (from North Africa, Keay XXVI, XXXII, LXI and LXII, and eastern types such as Keay LIII, LIV and LXV), and perhaps these were supplies for the local *milites*, who will have been based in the nearby castle of Concepcion (Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007, 224–230). The quarter went into decline after the Byzantine period, but in the 9th century it saw revival with an Islamic settlement.

The domestic structures that we find in the Hispanic Byzantine area, in contrast with the houses known in Byzantine North Africa, featured modest techniques and materials (small and medium stones, *spolia*, clay-bonding, earthen floors), without any decorative and ornamental characteristics. With our current state of knowledge, in cities such as *Carthago Spartia*, *Septem* and *Malaca*, it seems that there were no special 'Byzantine' building techniques in operation. As in the Visigothic territories, these domestic spaces – closely comparable to those found in rural contexts – had hearths on the floors and had silos, which were used as stores but also for waste disposal (Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007, 379–403).

Probably the main difference with the Visigothic territory is the absence of the noted *Grubenhäuser*/sunken-featured buildings in this area, although recently one case in the territory of *Malaca* was documented: in the *villa* of de Arroyo Vaquero (Estepona), a high number of silos and structures with circular and rectangular forms were excavated which could be related with *Grubenhäuser* (Vizcaíno Sánchez 2007, 170). However, as this habitat appeared after the breakdown of the late Roman rural settlement, which happened by the end of the 6th century, so these possible sunken-featured buildings may in fact belong to the 7th century, at a time when Byzantine control had been lost here or was fading. Alternatively, we could

speculate that this reflects how the Byzantine forces could also include *Germanic* mercenaries and these huts relate in some way to such soldiers. Again, I would argue that we await further finds – or a lack of such – to clarify this discussion; certainly, we remain ignorant still of core Byzantine presences, such as military bases and barracks, and even Byzantine-phase churches.

Ethnic landscapes? The crystallisation of a new society

From the writings of Hydatius, whose narrative covered the years between AD 379 and 469, it is possible to see how the Roman identity of the peninsula's inhabitants changed notably compared with the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. In fact, when Hydatius used the term 'Roman' he referred mainly to the aristocracy, suggesting a socio-economic attribute, discarding any kind of ethnic issues. Indeed, regarding the external enemies, he did not describe any physical characteristics to these (cf. Díaz Martínez 2015). Only one century later, as the primary sources relate, the main group of outsiders, the Visigoths, had become fully established in the Peninsula and, although the laws refer to both Romans and Goths, possible differences between the two seem minimal except, potentially, in the burial record. Far less visible, as seen, are the Suevi, who do not seem to have developed any political/ ideological distinction based on ethnicity, while the Byzantines can only be distinguished through military supply goods and a few other cultural traits.

In sum, we lack any real picture of the possible differences – physiognomy, cultural habits and practices, dress, language and so on – between all these *gentes*, not just the initial wave of people, but also among the three 'stable' power groups that lived together in the Peninsula for much of the 6th century. In addition, archaeologically, at present, there are few traces of differentiation in their modes of settlement, housing or everyday material display. From close analysis of the historical sources, Koch (2006) in fact maintains that there was no ethnic division in Visigothic Spain and that already in the 6th century the Gothic identity was general to the whole population of the *Regnum*.

The funerary record, meanwhile, is problematic since, while tombs of Suevi and Byzantines seem not to differ from those generally evident in late Roman Spain, the so-called Visigothic cemeteries are characterised by goods of 'Germanic' fashion. However, as discussed, whereas in the past such material as belt buckles and necklaces was

linked firmly with the 'new' Visigothic population, now it is recognised that such associations are not easily applicable or unequivocal. And yet, what is difficult to ignore is the coincidence in the time-span between the arrival of the Goths into *Hispania* and the appearance of these so-called Visigothic cemeteries. These burials, noticeably, have a particular geography in the Peninsula and belong to the 5th century and the first half of the 6th, and they are practically non-existent from the second half of that century and into the 7th century, when the insertion of grave goods was given up. Is this mainly an indication that, in the context of a more secure and stable *Regnum*, such markers of 'Gothicness' disappeared, being no longer required? Was the deposition of grave goods no longer fashionable? Was there a mental or religious change that prompted change? Was there even an economic factor, with possessions kept for the living rather than put into graves? Perhaps, by the end of the 6th century, the process of acculturation – of Goths becoming more like Romans and vice versa through sharing of space, intermarriage, economic activity and so on – was well advanced and this impacted on funerary practice and ritual. In my opinion, considering the limited geographical and chronological range, and the fact that these 'furnished' tombs were in reality a minority in the wider funerary context for that period, we might also consider that those persons buried in the so-called Visigothic cemeteries relate to one or more specific groups that formed the heterogenic people who entered in the Peninsula under the name of the 'Goths', and who chose to express, in their rural cemeteries, some enduring elements of their own perceived identity.

In this regard, it is valuable to observe how, in two close-set villages, Gózquez and El Pelícano, substantial differences exist that might be associated with different populations. Thus, while in the cemetery related to Gózquez there were some inhumations with 'typical' Visigothic grave goods (though such personal adornments disappeared from the burials by the late 6th century, subsequently being evident but to a lesser extent in houses of the village after *c.* AD 600), in El Pelícano (a site established over an ancient *villa*) the 6th- and 7th-century cemetery lacks such 'Visigothic' materials, featuring instead metal elements of late Roman tradition (Quirós Castillo and Vigil-Escalera 2011, 171–173). Do such differences reveal a Visigothic village on the one hand and another under the control of the descendants of the late Roman estate on the other? Yet the scenario is perhaps complicated by the fact that sunken-featured structures, potentially linked (as argued above) to Germanic settlers, also appear

at El Pelícano. Is this perhaps the case of a Germanic-style construction simply adopted by near-neighbours?

Either way, I view this new rural organisation, featuring hamlets and houses built in different styles, and the sites of ancient *villae* completely restructured, as the result of many factors, in which new, foreign populations must have played some part. Why we should exclude the likelihood/possibility that these arrived in the Peninsula with their own kind of domestic mindset in terms of modes of habitation and likewise of burial? At the same time, in terms of poorer techniques in building, we must recognise how the 6th century was economically much weaker than the Empire of the 2nd or 4th century AD and, as a result, there was less scope for use of stone (unless reused, as was the case also for churches) and fewer skilled engineers; the scale of operations was thus reduced and we understand therefore the recourse to the use of timber, small sized and more basic houses and so on. Nevertheless, even considering all these factors, it is difficult to ignore that sunken-featured houses do denote something new in the Hispanic landscape.

I would argue that we have underestimated the transcendence of the funerary rituals for the human mind. Although we may accept that a 'Danubian fashion' extended across the later Western Roman Empire and its military, and we need to acknowledge that discovery of a 'Gothic' belt buckle in a house does not necessary mean that a Goth occupied that domestic unit, the act of being buried with these kinds of grave goods must have held some deeper relevance. Moreover, such personal possessions were something more than small ornaments in being associated with a specific type of dress, and mark out a very personal image to be projected. Accordingly, it would seem odd to think that one might want to be buried with clothes and adornments that belong to another 'culture' and/or group of people. When talking about early medieval Italy and the Lombards (contemporaries with the Visigoths), Wickham (1981, 68), said in this sense that 'a man or a woman with a Lombard-style brooch is no more necessarily a Lombard than a family in Bradford with a Toyota is Japanese; artefacts are not a secure guide to ethnicity'. It is possible to give this sort of assessment also to Hispanic Visigothic cemeteries, but it could seem rather forced to compare the minds or outlooks of these *gentes* with our own modern way of thinking – for example, while one can nowadays drive a Japanese car and wear Uniqlo trousers, it would be difficult or very unlikely indeed that you would decide to be buried with a kimono if you are European or an African. Nor should we forget, moreover, that these 'Visigothic' grave goods were almost

always associated with non-elites and, above all, with women, which would argue against the idea of social emulation.

Currently, what we know for certain is that these 'Visigothic' cemeteries differed from the majority of the burials of this period in the Peninsula; they appeared in a period of change, when new powers were settling and establishing their presence and control, and with insecurity strong for all social groups; but most were concentrated in the Meseta, between the Duero and Tajo valleys – probably one of the less well inhabited parts of ancient Roman *Hispania*. In fact, can we think that this choice was a way to avoid social conflict? And was this a more or less an agreed decision?

We must bear in mind that, before the definitive establishment and empowerment of the Visigothic State, there were internal late Roman struggles, there was conflict and insecurity in land and town alike. The migration of these *gentes* to the Peninsula was far from a 'pacific' entrance, as reported in the ancient sources. No doubt the latter exaggerated the scale of upheaval and damage, but we should accept that – as in many historical periods and places – any invasion and/or migration of large groups of people did not happen without some kind of resistance from the original/ native inhabitants. Probably, some people (notably high elites) from the Hispano-Roman substrate, discontented with the late Roman Empire's demands and the resultant economic crisis, actually welcomed the newcomers, seeing them as a positive change. However, this was not the general trend, and in deeply Romanised areas, such as the ancient *Tarraconensis* and the *Baetica*, we should look for efforts at resistance, reluctance and opposition to these foreigners. Although there is little direct information about this, the situation had to be evident during the 5th century and the early 6th, when the newcomers and the first generations of Goths born in the Iberian Peninsula probably still felt distinct from the 'natives' – even if the latter, of course, will only have known *Hispania* as their home. By the end of the 6th century, thanks to the unification of the territory and peoples under the Nicene creed and the efforts of the Church Councils and the statesmen of the *Regnum*, any possible contrasts were surely wholly cancelled out, the population now together under the same religion and in obedience to the king. As a consequence, what still appear in the sources as *Gothic* and seemingly distinct from the rest of the population were probably high elites related in one way or another with the State, making this theoretically 'ethnic' term an element of ongoing social differentiation and thus a way to reinforce their position in the kingdom's social pyramid.

Notes

1 Until the definitive establishment of the *sedes regia* in *Toletum,* the court and the king moved between various Hispanic cities – often dependent on military needs (Ripoll López 2000, 373–374).
2 See Chapter 3, pp. 50–53.
3 On the *Consularia Caesaraugustana*, likely made up of extracts based on one or more late Roman *fasti* or *consularia*, see Chapter 2.
4 See Chapters 4 and 5 on this issue.
5 However, chronologies are based on ceramic finds, often without a detailed analysis of the built structures.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Landscapes of power and the new social organisation of early medieval *Hispania*

In his substantial and hugely erudite *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400–800* (2005), Chris Wickham highlights how our understanding of late Roman and early medieval *Hispania* suffers from a scarcity of archaeological data, hardly offset by the equally restricted literary sources. Despite these weaknesses, Wickham provides an excellent and coherent analysis of change (and continuity) in the Peninsula across these turbulent centuries. However, since its publication more than a decade ago, we can positively identify a notable improvement in the scale, value and range of archaeological data for the time period AD 300–700, to such a degree that my own book can provide a fuller assessment of the characteristics of the transformation process between the end of Roman rule and the demise of the Visigothic Kingdom.

In the multifaceted landscapes that formed the late and post-classical Iberian Peninsula, the analysis of towns and cities is key to understanding how far central places were still fundamental for the functioning of the State. Despite the traditional idea of the decay and loss of many urban centres during this period, the archaeology shows a clear tendency for a long-lasting life. Undoubtedly, however, some cities underwent an intense deceleration over this period, even disappearing in a few cases, as a consequence of a process initiated in the last centuries of Roman rule. But we have seen how, overall, the Visigothic Kingdom was highly urbanised and towns were, in fact, crucial in its socio-economic organisation.

The *territoria* of these urban centres remained active, albeit with a deep transformation in control and hierarchy from the *villae* to the articulation of secondary settlements. In the Iberian Peninsula, the

mid-5th century marks the moment of sudden collapse of the late classical rural system, witnessing the breakdown and abandonment of many villas and the progressive growth of a new organisation of the landscape, formed by villages, farms and hamlets, but also the significant appearance of hilltop sites and even some monasteries. This, obviously, is a vital process in understanding more securely in terms of chronologies and of agency: can we trace it as far back as the 4th century, when most of the *villae*, the foci of large estates, were at their height? But who dwelt then in these villas? Were the owners regular or occasional visitors, and did they move between their various properties and urban residences? Villas will have had a stable presence of slaves but also freemen, countryfolk to live in and work the lands. In this relatively stable and peaceful phase of the Iberian Peninsula, partially detached from wider imperial politics and State problems, power and landed wealth became more and more concentrated in the hands of the high aristocracy. As a consequence of the formation of these large estates and a substantial increase in taxation pressure, we observe (as reflected in the archaeology through field survey) how smallholders started to vanish or, at least, to seek refuge under large *possessores*, meaning that the rich men/families became richer and the poor became poorer.

What then happened to villas and their owners? Villa abandonment is an archaeologically well-documented process, revealing an image of rooms in disuse, earth accumulating over floors and mosaics, baths and water systems out of use – and all this seemingly happening before sites were 're-colonised' by (generally timber) huts and workspaces, cutting into the debris and into floors. But what is meant when we speak of 'abandonment' of these formerly opulent/well-furnished residential rural complexes? Does it apply to both residential and productive spaces? Does it relate more to a 'withdrawal' of the wealth of the owner, or also of the workforce?

No one leaves their properties voluntarily, and so it is worth asking why these spaces were abandoned. If obliged or forced to, we might think that these abandonments occurred within situations of conflict, such as when various rich landowners supported the emperor Honorius against the usurper Constantine III, which likely resulted in a confiscation of their lands. But perhaps this was never a 'real' abandonment, and what happened was that the *possessores* stopped using these villas as recreational spaces and holiday bases, yet retained their productive character. This might have been due also to insecurity, but what we cannot tell is if the owners removed any 'mobile' wealth displays from these villas. Land was still income and it

was crucial that lands continued to be worked. Different might then be abandonments as a consequence of the violence and looting caused by the climate of warfare across the 5th century, with new *gentes* needing food and also lands on which to settle; in this context many large landowners probably decided to reside in well-defended sites, such as towns, but perhaps even in the new/emergent hilltop settlements, whose location will have ensured some security. Personally, I think that both reasons are not mutually exclusive; indeed, it is possible to link these abandonments with enforced situations – such as a forfeiture of assets – and also with deliberate decisions to reside in more secure sites, while hoping that their villas could maintain production. More widely, however, the economy was damaged by the warfare – stores confiscated, lands left uncultivated, slaves and farmers fleeing and so on.

Overall, what seems clear is a resultant, intense transformation of the landscape, in which there was no space for the former displays of luxury and wealth, and a reduction in the scale of activity. Indeed, what the archaeology reveals is a (not too slow) process of change, marked by the appearance of new forms of habitat: between the second half of the 5th century and the early 6th there is the reoccupation of the sites of ancient *villae*, many of which developed into hamlets and/or villages; we see the creation of *ex-novo* villages; and there is a re-emergence of the so-called hilltop-site phenomenon. I believe that, even if archaeologically it is currently impossible to see a clear chronological differentiation, the start of the process probably developed from the transformed *villae*, where, apart from the built units, there were many square kilometres of associated *fundus* to exploit; then, a second phase would see a growth of villages within these old lands, suggestive of independent farming communities, distinct from the old villa owners.

Thus, at these (partially?) ruinous villas, some of the residential spaces were reoccupied rapidly with new, mainly timber-built structures, while others were left empty. In my view, this transformation need not indicate different processes: if we accept that many landowners still owned their properties and that the new tenants were some of the former peasants/farm-workers, then it is probable that, for a while at least, the *pars urbana* was quitted or left vacant, maybe waiting the return of calmer times. When the former lavish spaces (*e.g.* reception rooms and baths) of these sites were 'colonised', we see how these tend to develop into productive spaces. Pottery kilns, artisanal spaces, presses for oil and wine and other

structures were installed, while other spaces were used as stables, as storage area and also for living. This does not exclude the idea that members of the new *gentes* (Suevi, Visigoths) also came to occupy these spaces. But the problem is that we cannot establish exactly who were the occupiers of one villa site or another, because the archaeology cannot distinguish between native and newcomer; each seem materially poorer than the late Roman owners. More detailed site excavations hopefully will enhance this picture at some point.

Interestingly, the scarce literary sources that make reference to the countryside and its new organisation still imply a landscape dominated by large estates and rich landowners during the 6th and probably 7th centuries; does this, then, signify no substantial change, with an elite (and perhaps one now enriched by Germanic counterparts) still owning most of the lands? The problem is, as noted, that the elite are no longer visible in the rural archaeological record – this being a notable difference compared to the Roman past – and this, indeed, is a sizeable problem if we want to demonstrate their existence. There are some rare 'palace-like' structures, such as at Pla de Nadal, that might form an early medieval 'reinterpretation' of an ancient *villa* as an elite focus of land control, but the truth is that it seems that the elite, between the 5th and the 8th centuries, only rarely lived in the countryside. They might well have owned rural properties, but likely resided in the cities or were based in the new fortified hilltop sites – the latter, in many cases, established in areas featuring a low density of urban centres and/or where Roman towns declined (as can be observed in the Duero basin and in the ancient *Gallaecia*).

While hilltop sites emerge across much of the Peninsula, there is a notable concentration in the North-West, coinciding with a particular 'hot-point', namely the Suevic-Visigothic frontier; but they emerged also in the Catalan region – notably in its mountainous areas – and in the Byzantine province of the South-East. I have a vague suspicion that the complete absence of these in other peninsular areas coincides more with less developed research rather than a lack of sites, although where towns persisted in numbers, such as in the most important river valleys (Ebro, Tagus and Guadalquivir) and the eastern coast, they might not have been necessary, since the urban centres acted as defended sites and articulated the territory as central places. Where hilltop sites did develop, these were characterised for their 'strategic' siting, for defences and also better quality domestic constructions (in stone) and a wider range of ceramics, in contrast with the set-up in many lowland villages and hamlets. The chronology of these hilltop

spaces, however, is very broad, from the 4th/5th to 7th/8th centuries, and in a few cases lasting longer, perhaps indicative of specific local/regional roles, that we will only able to appreciate if we zoom in and develop a micro-spatial analysis.

These hilltop sites were thus secondary sites in the landscape, between the pre-eminent urban centres and the functional, land-oriented villages and hamlets; they might have been bases for a lesser nobility or a 'local' aristocracy, ones either working independently from or else part-dependent on urban-based elites. Production activities in the landscape were, however, clearly much reduced compared with previous (Roman) centuries, not just because the scale of organisation and landholding, but also with drier and more arid conditions affecting farming as well as the rearing of livestock (marked by a reduction of the size of the animals). This climatic situation may well be behind efforts to recover wastelands for grazing or cultivation to aid the self-sufficiency of the rural communities, but also to pay rents to the *possessores*, whether religious or lay.

We are still ignorant, however, of the true relationship between these elites and the new forms of habitats (villages, farms, hamlets, etc.) and the peasant communities, although we should expect some level of elite control over these. But was this a secular elite, or should we also think of Church control, via monasteries or directly via episcopal power? One problem is that we do not know how much land and labour was Church-owned. Were those churches and the nearby necropoleis established over the ruinous ancient *villae* an elite initiative to support workers, or Church efforts to promote the evangelisation of the countryside? Indeed, although only a partial picture can be presented given the current state of knowledge, it seems that *ex-novo* villages always appeared without an associated church, even if often there was a cemetery; in the rare cases of a church linked to a cemetery and village, this tends to be erected over a ruinous villa (obviously, I am referring to the *whole* property, not just the residential units).

Through comparison with other Mediterranean territories, we know that these new rural settlements are not usually related to the arrival and presence of foreign newcomers in the Peninsula, but the evolution of the landscape and its inhabitants following the definitive breakdown of the Roman system. That collapse had meant much change for people, peasants, productivity, expressions of wealth, economic visibility and so on, and what I would highlight is the resultant limited social differentiation between one group and

another, both in the higher social strata and the lower classes, from the 5th century. Personally, I believe that in an impoverished society, especially in the rural sphere, with scarce social segregation, the presence of grave goods, where they do appear, and the sunken-featured buildings were probably some of the few elements that might form differentiating elements. As argued above, despite arguments seeing a local, but Protohistoric precursor, I think it is very unlikely that someone would 'revive' a forgotten domestic tradition after so many centuries; rather, this new domestic and rural architecture may well denote a new introduction, brought with the new populations; if so, this can give us some clue as to who lived in some of these villages. However, we must recognise that this new building form might swiftly have been adopted also by native groups, making this, with time, much less of a differentiating element.

Higher up in the hierarchy, if we use only the archaeological record, there appear fewer social differences or less marked ones if compared with the precedent of the Roman past. I think that this relates to an unquestioningly economically depleted society, which had little margin for excesses or large-scale display. But if we incorporate the literary sources, including laws, and we assess the role of the new Visigothic elites and the previous inhabitants in this revised social and physical landscape, it is possible to offer a coherent reconstruction of social and settlement organisation, in which aristocrats, peasants, slaves and servants had roles, all under the watchful eye of the monarchy and, most importantly, the Church.

As said, however, neither the aristocracy nor the monarchy have left a clear mark in the physical elements that we have studied, apart from some (rare) foundations, such as *Reccopolis*, or urban investments, such as that palatine complex developed in a suburban area of the capital, *Toletum*. Perhaps for that reason, the impressive Treasure of Guarrazar, offered by various kings of the Visigoths to the Church, is still one of the best known objects of this period, being used on the cover of many books (including this one) that study these centuries.

The lack of visibility in the archaeological record of the secular aristocracy, of course, does not mean the actual absence of an aristocratic identity, which must have operated in the social organisation. To be fair, some traits might be seen in the scarce remains of civic architecture preserved/excavated in some cities and, more rarely, in rural contexts; perhaps, we can also see their hand in the construction/ reconstruction of urban defences and those of hilltop sites, or in the restoration of bridges and other public works.

This ‘invisibility’ is not true for high members – bishops primarily – of the Church, who are named and tangible not just via a remarkable collection of texts but also through an important group of extant and excavated buildings, from rural churches to episcopal complexes, from *xenodochia* to monasteries, which all definitively changed the physiognomy of the townscapes and the countryside. In towns, the pre-eminence of these buildings over other constructions is so overwhelming that, notwithstanding some archaeological shortcomings to recognise lay/secular groups, it is impossible to underplay the dominance of the role and the power of Church in the life of the kingdom’s citizens.

Thanks to increasing archaeological analysis of the countryside in recent decades, we are starting to see also the ecclesiastical hand in some of the transformations here. The emergence of monasteries, which were always controlled by bishops, in the Peninsula is a well-documented phenomenon in the 6th century, which should link with the strengthening of the Visigothic Kingdom. Such monasteries were not just religious foci, but were real production points – supported by servants and peasants – and likely had a strong role as a mechanism of organisation over other, nearby rural communities. These monasteries may well have had notable evangelising roles, although how that functioned is not known. Most of these monasteries developed in suburban areas, close to the main towns and cities, but also close to the principal communication roads, suggesting that they were indeed a controlling element in the *territoria*, perhaps overseeing even transhumance routes.

It can be noted, in terms of the Christianisation of the countryside, that the Spanish North-West saw a delayed process, partly due to the limited number of urban centres here, compared to the Guadalquivir and the Ebro valleys; it is argued that this area saw a persistence into the 6th–7th centuries of pagan practices and of heresies. Accordingly, this area and period sees a monastic boom, perhaps with the core aim of incorporating a largely rustic society.

Here I should stress that most of the post-classical/early medieval villages did not have a church; we have to wait till the Middle Ages to see the typical conformation of church and village. Indeed, many of the rural churches known for the Visigothic Kingdom seem not to be related with a particular village and so may well, in some cases, have belonged to monastic complexes. The abbots, like the local aristocracy based in hilltop sites and even in towns, were presumably the intermediaries between the working communities and the bishops

and, even, the kings.

Exactly how all this new settlement and social landscape was articulated and functioned remains to be explored through new archaeological analysis. Key is questioning how the towns and countryside interacted: if towns were redistribution centres, how did this work? If the hilltop elites were intermediaries, how might this be shown archaeologically? And how did villa-site communities differ from other villages? What relationships lay between these? And, within this, we want still to ask more about who these people were. Are the villages all of the native population groups? Do we find 'Visigoths' or 'Suevi' at the hilltop sites? Do some of these sites coincide with, precede or follow the Visigothic takeover?

We remain both historically and archaeologically ill-informed about the first two or three generations of Visigoths in the Peninsula, with practically no documentation about the process of the arrival and settlement. They must have arrived with a far from egalitarian social order, which probably allowed a not too complicated integration with the pre-existing Hispanic population. Indeed, the preserved legal texts reveal a scarce problematic issue between the Hispano-Gothic relationship, while social conflict was always related to economic differences more than anything else. In the Ebro Valley, for example, most of the *nobiles* had Roman roots, while the information for *Emerita* in the 6th century also shows an ongoing Hispano-Roman aristocracy. Indeed, what the limited archaeology shows is not referable to 'cultural markers' of distinction within and between the Visigothic or Roman elite. In the current stage of research, it is fair enough to ask if the 'ethnicity' could be considered as a tangible resource for the archaeology of this period. Arguably, from the end of the 6th century onwards, the distinctions made between *Gothi* and *Romani* were probably an elite's tool to highlight and conserve their social position and to stand out from the rest. This compact group of people, the aristocracy and some bishops, were almost always large landholders, who wielded power and thus controlled production, surpluses and, above all, rents and taxes.

In all likelihood, many of the traits of land ownership and the labour on the lands maintained a clear late Roman character, whereas some of the relationships between the landlords and the peasants seem closer to a pre-feudal system. The importance of overcoming the traditional topic of breakdown/decay and continuity is perhaps key to analysing the post-classical Iberian Peninsula, which gradually became less part of a wide (i.e. Roman/imperial) network and more a series of small territories – in some cases, ones just centred on cities/towns. In

that sense, the socio-cultural and settlement adaptations and impositions that I have explored in this book do not appear to have come as part of a clear strategy, such as from a coherent State policy, but are ones that depended far more on local decisions. Thus, in the current state of knowledge, especially given the limited textual sources of the period, it will surely only be through new archaeological finds and analysis that we will gain better information on and insights into the process of integration between the Hispano-Roman population and these Gothic (and, likewise, Suevic) incomers, and the development of a new mixed society with its own dynamics and peculiarities. The picture remains complex and challenging for late antique and Visigothic *Hispania*, but it is a study that merits much more attention. Similarly, it will be important to understand better the character of towns, landscape and society in the latest stages of the Visigothic Kingdom, before the arrival of the Islamic troops, whose conquests would start another new process in the Peninsula, in which everything changed again.

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